

Sithutha Isizwe (“We Carry the Nation”): Dispossession, Displacement, and the Making
of the Shared Minibus Taxi in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, 1930-Present

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Table of Contents

List of Figures	ii
List of Abbreviations	iii
Prologue	1
Chapter 1	17
Introduction: Dispossession and Displacement: Questions Framing Thesis	
Chapter 2	94
Historical Antecedents of the Shared Minibus Taxi: The Cape Colony, 1830-1930	
Chapter 3	135
Apartheid, Forced Removals, and Public Transportation in Cape Town, 1945-1978	
Chapter 4	165
Black Capitalism in the Black Taxi Revolution in Johannesburg, 1970-1990	
Chapter 5	223
Taxis in the World of Neoliberalism and Post-Apartheid South Africa, 1990-2000	
Chapter 6	269
Reinterpreting the History of Taxis: A Gendered Analysis	
Chapter 7	315
Conclusion	
Bibliography	320

List of Figures

2.1	Cape Town Post-Apartheid Racial Segregation, 2011	96
2.2	Nationwide Railway Passenger Traffic, 1890-1985	100
2.3	Cape Province Population Growth, Relative to Transvaal, 1890-1985	101
2.4	Nationwide Commercial Vehicles and Passenger Cars in Use, 1920-1988.....	101
3.1	Railroad, Commercial Vehicle, and Passenger Car Growth, 1948-1978.....	138
4.1	Soweto Commuter Bus Ridden into Ditch.....	173
4.2	PUTCO Commuter Bus Backed into Building	173
4.3	Commuter Bus After Explosion	174
4.4	Destroyed Commuter Buses Side by Side, Interior View.....	174
4.5	“Stay Away” Signage	175
4.6	The official and ONLY journal of the Southern African Black Taxi Association	190
4.7	Profiling Who (Not) To Trust in the Taxi Industry	190
4.8	Marketing Masculinity in the Taxi Industry	191
4.9	A Paper for the People	192
4.10	Furniture Discounts for Sabta Members	193
4.11	“Nissan Donates 32 Taxis to Sabta”	194
4.12	“Rags to Riches:” Middle-Class Dreams of Owning a Taxi.....	195
4.13	Sex and Young Women in the Taxi Industry	196
4.14	M. J. Sekamotho’s Taxis	198
5.1	Nationwide Commercial Vehicle Growth, 1972-1995	225
5.2	“New Ford Husky: The Bus You’ve Been Waiting For”	231
5.3	Shared Minibus Taxi and Commercial Vehicle Growth, 1979-1989	239
5.4	“SABTA Meets Schoeman [in] Historic Taxi Talks,” <i>Drive On</i> , September 1981	247

List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
BTR	Black Taxi Revolution
CATA	Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association
Codeta	Congress of Democratic Taxi Associations
DoT	National Department of Transport
GTA	Groblersdal Taxi Association
GUTAC	Groblersdal United Taxi Association Committee
HODS	Hands of District Six Campaign
IFP	Inkhata Freedom Party
LAGUNYA	Langa, Guguletu, and Nyanga Taxi Association
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex (Community)
LRTB	Local Road Transportation Board
MK	Umkhonto weSizwe, armed wing of the ANC
NAAMSA	National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa
NAFCOC	National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and Industry
NAFTO	National African Federation Transport Organisation
NARS	National Archives and Records Service
NTA	National Taxi Alliance
PADNETA	Pretoria and District Non-European Taxi Association
PTA	Peninsula Taxi Association
PUTA	Pretoria United Taxi Association
PUTCO	Public Utility Transport Company
SABTA	Southern African Black Taxi Association
SALDTA	South African Long Distance Taxi Association
Santaco	South African Taxi Council
SAPS	South African Police Services
SATS	South African Transportat Services
SPP	The Surplus People's Project
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TTA	Transworld Taxi Association
UCT	The University of Cape Town
UWC	The University of the Western Cape
VOC	Dutch East India Company
WCARS	Western Cape Archives and Records Service
Webta	Western Cape Black Taxi Association

PROLOGUE

I grew up believing suburbs grew trees to beautify the roads to the city. This ahistorical, a-geographic worldview captures the epistemology that my Bronx bus-driving father, and my train-commuting, driver's license-less mother, through no fault of their own, instilled in me as a working-poor native New Yorker. It took writing this dissertation to begin pondering New York City's real environmental history: that various Dutch and British commercial entities cleared mountains and forests to make room for the city, the suburbs, and the roads that connected them hundreds of years ago.¹ In the process these companies dispossessed indigenous communities of their claims to the valleys, hills, pools, and waterways, and created European markets and settlements in their stead. Colonial dispossession also frames the story of my objects of historical inquiry in the Global South: specifically, the multitudinous minibuses that carried humans and their belongings across Southern Africa's historically traumatized rural and urban space, when South Africa's apartheid state legalized the 10-seat minibus taxi the year after the 1976 Soweto Uprising.²

¹ With their similar histories of the British Empire taking over the Dutch East and West India Companies, which had cordoned off indigenous people from accessing the Atlantic Ocean by setting up trading towns, New York City and Cape Town offer wonderful comparative historical insight. I will go through the post-abolition case in Cape Town at length in Part One of the thesis, but for New York City's colonial history, see Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

² Rhetorically, "1976" signals a crucial turning-point in South Africa's history because the year witnessed the radicalization of black, youth-led anti-apartheid political activity. Precisely because 1976 has such rhetorical weight, for the purpose of my study, I will use "1976/77/78" to indicate the birth minibus taxi in the historical record and the shift from Cape Town taxi history to Johannesburg taxi history in architecture of my thesis. Though not explicitly part of the Alex van Breda Commission Road Transportation Act of 1977, which legalized minibus taxis, bus boycotts culminating with the destruction of buses during the Soweto Uprising moved the apartheid state to employ myriad strategies to

My early beliefs reflect the present state of knowledge in South Africa, where there have been few attempts to begin histories of transport and transportation³ in any geographical context that may also correspond to the narrative of state-sanctioned human and environmental dispossession and displacement. Precisely because transportation, expansion, sprawl, and settlement are so closely tied to visions of modernity and societal progress, beginning transportation histories with colonialism seems counterintuitive – particularly in the West, and certainly in the United States. However, in late 20th-century South Africa, where the story of true democratic progress has also been tied to reconciliation between peoples, one cannot begin any story of transportation and people moving – in the context of the privileged and powerful regulating people’s movements and settlements – without also considering forced removals, passes and prisons, whites-only spaces, and the innumerable laws segregating individuals and families by race since the 17th century.⁴

depoliticize public transport for black South Africans who increasingly saw buses and trains as symbols of apartheid. Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983); Colleen McCaul, *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1990); Meshack M Khosa, "Changing Patterns of 'Black' Bus Subsidies in the Apartheid City, 1944–1986," *GeoJournal* 22, no. 3 (1990). Search for “bus” in the digital archive of Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, "I Saw a Nightmare..." *Doing Violence to Memory: The Soweto Uprising, June 16, 1976*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

³ Throughout the thesis I use “transport” and “transportation” interchangeably to mean horse-drawn carts, rickshaws, bicycles, buses, minibus taxis, trains, and other machines people make to move people and things far from their sites of origin. Moreover, throughout my reading I have noticed historians from the United States use transportation more than transport to describe discuss these technologies, and transport more than transportation in the rest of the English-speaking world. In any case, I use both words to mean the exact same thing.

⁴ See term glossaries in Roger Omond, *The Apartheid Handbook*, Second Edition ed. (London: Pelican Books, 1986); Laurine Platzky and Cherryl Walker, *The Surplus People: Forced Removals in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985).

Putting history front and center in transport narratives and theories about automobile technologies has the potential to draw more conclusions about how the internal combustion engine – unlike anything else in the 20th century – transformed human's social relationships with each other, machines, and cities.⁵ I know this from my own experience, driving between Morris, Minnesota and Minneapolis, constantly searching for sites where I could compose this very dissertation.

Case in point: on December 31, 2017, it was so bitter and cold outside my almost twenty-year-old car would not start. Moreover, that day was a Sunday and a holiday, so there was no one around to help me jumpstart the battery. I ended up leaving my car in minus 14F degree weather for several days before asking a police officer for a jump when the temperature finally rose to a couple degrees above zero. When the cop arrived in the parking lot, I struggled to unlatch the hood. I assumed it had frozen closed, but the cop found a way to open it. One charge later from the cop, I took the car on a drive to give the engine a chance to recover. Mid-drive, a gust of wind blew the hood up, off the front of my car, and into the air, landing 50 feet behind me. It seemed the hood hadn't latched completely after the cop jumpstarted my vehicle. "It'll cost you \$500 to get your car back on the road safely," the technician at one auto body shop told me. In the meantime, I spent around \$65 to get to the airport in a shuttle in order to attend an academic conference out of town, and an additional \$75 to stay overnight in a hotel in order to accommodate the infrequent shuttle schedule.

⁵ Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The City and the Car," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24, no. 4 (2000).

The stress I experienced that week was enormous. I thought, “how am I going to make it to my conference? How was I supposed to be mentally fit to present my new research?” I knew in that moment that if I was not able to work through the particular car troubles of that week my academic livelihood would be on the line. That moment’s epiphany proved to me that I had just shared a fate similar to the subjects I wrote about. Indeed, shared transport – similar to the one I am writing about here – saved me that week. Since my car was out of commission, I purchased a ticket on a “shuttle” – America’s ubiquitous communal/shared “taxi” service – that left from a larger neighboring town (Alexandria, MN), and dropped me off at the airport 205km away. The limited schedule of pick-ups and drop-offs didn’t work well with my work and travel schedules, so I made do by paying for a night at an inexpensive hotel not too far from the airport. The hotel also provided a 24-hour shuttle for guests to take between the hotel and the airport.

My story illuminates the amount of time and financial resources it takes to travel – a problem shared transport was designed to correct. Moreover, my travel involved so many people – including service providers from drivers to telephone operators – and so much effort that I could have all too easily neglected to recognize a central part of the reason I had to travel so far from Morris to Minneapolis in the first place.⁶ The university

⁶ In discussing paratransit organizational structures, like that of South Africa’s shared minibus taxi, Cervero contrasts the vertical structure of private and state-run buses with paratransit’s horizontal frame. Rather than having operations dictated from above, paratransit depends on “carefully cultivated linkages and nurtured relationships among stakeholders, including fellow operators, parts suppliers, local police, creditors, and street hustlers.” Robert Cervero, *Informal Transport in the Developing World* (Nairobi: United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), 2000), 44. I contrast horizontal and vertical transport organizational structures to the public transport as either oppression or resistance paradigm in the historical literature on transport. While the vertical structure

where I teach was established in the 19th century as an outpost – about 250km/170 miles removed from the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul – to promote the United States’ manifest destiny as well as the “civilizing” mission that would displace and root out Indian cultural life and livelihoods. Furthermore, it expended valuable financial and intellectual resources to drive that indigenous history – a history rooted in its geography – deeper and deeper into obscurity. The inevitable stressors from travel had the very potential to erase the very history of Native American dispossession and displacement that marks Minnesota as a settler colony, as much as anyplace in Africa. Today, the effort to remake the University of Minnesota, Morris as an exemplary liberal arts campus explicitly designed to include Native American studies – while at the same time not decolonizing the curriculum or the intellectual structures that inform the institution – does little to resolve the historical trauma rooted in the very land on which those students learn.⁷ While the case that social scientists Urry and Sheller made for advancing automobility as a discipline helps us understand how cars shape societies, particularly in the Global North, I now wonder what it would be like to refocus the lens on the Global

sees the state making transport laws, operations putting those laws into practice, and drivers following them to the best they can or abandoning them altogether, horizontal structures illuminate the seemingly infinitesimal factors, networks, and stakeholders, which only operators on the ground and their closest collaborators seem to understand. While the potential to resist unfair laws from above is indeed possible, horizontal networks reveal the numerous agents who make up the theoretical “agent” who has agency.

⁷ While their focus is more on capitalism than colonialism, employing Dennis and Urry’s use of complexity theory can help sustain a longer historical perspective of automobility in places that experienced settler colonialism like South Africa because of the way globalization makes car consumers less aware of the ways “providing transport” is historically contingent on the dispossession and displacement of the poor. Kingsley Dennis and John Urry, “Post-Car Mobilities,” in *Car Troubles: Critical Studies of Automobility and Auto-Mobility*, ed. Jim Conley and Arlene Tigar McLaren (Surrey, England and Vermont, USA: Ashgate Publishers, 2009).

South to analyze and solve problems with transport – both shared and private – in order to pay attention to the ways the transport landscape itself is rooted in long histories of colonization, and focus at least a portion of automobility studies to the promotion of restorative justice – that is, some method toward repossession and replacement rooted in indigenous epistemologies.⁸ This reframing also corrects Urry and Sheller’s contention that automobile shaped American life in the 20th century like no other technology by illuminating the ways settler colonialism founded “American life” in the first place. Similar to Ian Baucom’s argument about the ways slave capitalism shaped the modern world, as opposed to the Age of Revolutions and the Enlightenment,⁹ my study contends that dispossession and displacement makes clear the connections between empire, colonization, and automobility, both in South Africa and the United States.

I included this Prologue prior to my Introduction to show how my own body as a queer black public transport commuter car owner preparing to defend a dissertation in order to join a global middle-class (a class that reaps material benefits from American imperialism) has meaning in my own research. Like the people impacted by spatial reorganization and who overcame challenges of mobility and about whom I write, I, too, am haunted by the story of dispossession and displacement in my own historical context.¹⁰ Nothing makes this clearer in my mind than the history of my first two years of

⁸ Such works that have already taken up the challenge of indigenizing or decolonizing university spaces include, Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, eds., *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

⁹ Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ I borrow the term elusiveness from the Introduction to Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010). I use it to locate myself as part of a racial caste system in the United States that

owning a car from 2015 to 2017. I had explicitly bought a 2000 Toyota Camry from an ex-partner with 200,000 miles on it for \$2,000 to be able to accept a pre-doctoral fellowship teaching African history at that university (UM Morris) 170 miles from my university home in Minneapolis – that particular university whose “civilizing” mission was born as a 19th century Native American boarding school. A couple months after securing a tenure-track position at the same institution, the contentious 2016 Presidential election ended with Donald J. Trump installed as the United States of America’s 45th Commander-in-Chief. On nearly every road surrounding the town where I taught, I witnessed farmers and other small business owners celebrating the election with Trump flags, sometimes flying beside or underneath USA flags or Confederate flags. When I decided to take a drive to a neighboring town (usually in search of people who looked like me), I would pass countless Trump and Confederate flags. Reveling in the safety of my Camry’s four doors, I zipped by the flags and cornfields, emerging only to fill up the tank, and, after getting gas, I’d continue to move right along. I drove so much between November and December 2016 that I racked up thousands of additional miles and thousands of dollars in car maintenance. It was then that I realized freedom via automobility has its financial, personal, political, and emotional costs.

This Prologue, therefore, is reflective of black ethnography as method – something that has become increasingly incorporated into contemporary scholarship in world history – and demands that black bodies be included in the general scholarship on

disenfranchises black men at disproportionate numbers from the right to vote. The story I tell of owning a car in the main text expands the consequences of Alexander’s racial caste system to include middle-class black Americans’ encounters with law enforcement.

what counts as “human.”¹¹ Doing so compelled scholars such as geographer Katherine McKittrick and philosopher Sylvia Wynter to incorporate different interdisciplinary lenses into their disciplinary scholarship, blending humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and the arts. Wynter’s work on the black Caribbean was particularly mindful of all sorts of academic disciplines because her central project regarded “blackness” as fundamental to Western knowledge. This meant that it was important for Wynter to take up the task of trying to master as many of its strands as possible, with the purpose of “unraveling” it.¹² McKittrick places Wynter on the side of the modernity debate. Privileging global processes over all others – indeed because all others are fundamentally tied to it – “Wynter’s work,” McKittrick shows, “draws attention to the ways in which

¹¹ “Across her creative texts and her essays,” Katherine McKittrick writes of Sylvia Wynter, “Wynter demonstrates the ways in which a new, revalorized perspective emerges from the ex-slave archipelago and that this worldview, engendered both across and outside a colonial frame, holds in it the possibility of undoing and unsettling – not replacing or occupying – Western conceptions of what it means to be human.” McKittrick sees Wynter through her entire creative and academic corpus theorizing something that “undoes” and “unsettles” in McKittrick’s estimation, “Western conceptions of what it means to be human.” This is an important insight for me, if, as McKittrick argues, Wynter’s conception “undoes” and “unsettles” the colorblind nature of transport provisioning in South Africa, recognizing that transport was made for dispossessed and displaced humans – a fact that black South African humans embodied in the apartheid regime. Katherine McKittrick, “Yours in the Intellectual Struggle: Sylvia Wynter and the Realization of the Living,” in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 2.

¹² Put differently, Wynter and McKittrick cite black scholars across different disciplines with the aim to decolonize knowledge (philosophically, not necessarily politically). Wynter’s project, then, is a project to liberate blackness, as a “question-problem-space” to use McKittrick’s formulation, from the West’s subjugation of the world. In other words, for Wynter, interdisciplinarity is anticolonial. “This is a project that speaks to,” McKittrick adds, “to the interrelatedness of our contemporary situation and our embattled histories of conflicting and intimate relationalities.” McKittrick, 3.

transatlantic slavery – violent displacement – enforced the necessity of blacks to plant themselves as indigenous to the New World.”¹³

Writing a history dissertation on an object of inquiry that resonates so closely with my own experience compelled me to ask the question, “Why did it take combing through hundreds of stories documenting black experiences in a country 8,000 miles away before recognizing that the feelings of freedom I experienced in my adolescence on New York City’s subways were elusive precisely because they were made possible by the same colonial capitalism that cleared forests and displaced indigenous people?” While post-war politics may have sanctioned neighborhood gentrification and redlining, it was settler colonialism’s contract with capitalism – something borne out of the transatlantic slave trade – that made me forget gentrification’s and redlining’s deeper roots in American history. It is also this history that connects the United States to Africa through the African Diaspora. In addition to seeing confinement and mobility as two sides of the same transport coin, my study illuminates dispossession and displacement to reveal the limits and potential of the coin’s flip side. By looking at the South African example, and translating it through my encounters with the field and the archive, I hope to encourage scholars of transport to be forever cognizant of the ways dispossession and displacement made transport possible in the unlikeliest of places. This means illuminating as many stories that cross categories bounded in race and place, and making sense of it through autobiography, or what feminist ethnographer Zenzele Isoke called black ethnographic storytelling. “The black ethnographic storyteller,” Isoke writes, “is a fugitive making

¹³ McKittrick, 6.

home in unfamiliar places but never claiming a single one for herself... Truly," Isoke continues," black ethnography is not about the other."¹⁴

My concerns about taxi history and knowledge production in South Africa's post-apartheid era are inspired by a deep consideration of my own biography, so permit me to inhabit this anxiety for a brief moment and make sense of this particular space. I grew up proudly African American, born and raised in the Bronx, in a working-class ghetto of New York City, riding buses and the subway for many hours each day to and from the city's core for school – an experience that not only shaped my engagement with the city, but also inspired me to think about the cultural and social significance of public transportation wherever I go. And for many, indeed I "escaped" – in the same sense of the word that Anna Selmeczi of the University of Cape Town encountered in her conversations with the Sounds of the South, a South African hip-hop collective. Selmeczi argued that the experience of "escape" prompts a call to educate and bring about awareness in one's own community.¹⁵ When I was 17 years old, I migrated to rural Minnesota to attend a small university that encouraged its mostly white, middle-class American students to study abroad. Although I had a very different personal experience from my university peers, I left the USA for the first time in 2004 and traveled to study abroad in Cape Town. I have been traveling to Cape Town ever since, while maintaining

¹⁴ Zenzele Isoke, "Black Ethnography, Black (Female) Aesthetics: Thinking/Writing/Saying/Sounding Black Political Life," *Theory & Event* 21, no. 1 (2018): 153.

¹⁵ Anna Selmeczi, "Dis/Placing Political Illiteracy," in *South African Contemporary History and Humanities Seminar* (Center for Humanities Research: University of the Western Cape, 2013).

home bases in Minneapolis, Minnesota and in New York City, where my family continues to reside.

Since I was very young I have always been engaged in public transport, formal and informal. For the majority of my adolescence, I lived in the northeast corner of the Bronx, in a small neighborhood named Co-Op City.¹⁶ New York City public schools were infamously overcrowded in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the ways the city saved funds was by leveraging its public transportation network to eliminate the need to hire yellow school buses to take thousands of middle schoolers (grades 5-8, ages 10-13 years old). The Department of Education issued bus passes for middle schoolers who lived a certain distance from their schools. Scholars from families in the lowest income brackets received bus passes marked “free.” All others received passes marked “half.” In addition to showing their half passes, students whose families made too much to qualify for free bus passes would also have to pay fifty cents. Fares were raised at uneven intervals. And every time the city raised fares, my mother, who commuted to work by bus, complained, but eventually figured out how to budget for the .50 cent increases.

I enjoyed the relative independence of taking public transport to school from age 10 and up. My mother would wake me up, I would shower and have breakfast, and then I wouldn’t see my parents again until I got home. The free bus pass also allowed me to travel to my grandmother’s after school. I’d wait at my grandmother’s before going home until I was old enough to have my own key. Meanwhile, my grandmother would make me a snack, and I’d do my homework and watch television until my mother finished

¹⁶ Co-Op city is profiled in Ian Frazier, "Utopia, the Bronx. (Co-Op City)," *The New Yorker*, June 26, 2006.

working. Later, in high school, when I no longer had to wait at my grandmother's (although, I'd often choose to visit for snacks and television), I saw my relative independence from home expand even further. On top of taking the bus, I took the subway to school during my last two years of high school in a completely different borough: in Manhattan. I no longer ran into classmates, neighbors, and people from church on the way to school, not as I did when I was a commuter to middle school by bus. Traveling to high school, I sat in silence while strangers from all walks of NYC life boarded and disembarked. Mine met some other passengers' eyes, but we all mostly ignored each other. We expended the greatest amount of energy ignoring street performers and other passengers that broke the relative silence of the commute. While odd smells, loud sounds, inappropriate touches, and strange sights would sometimes break our resolve, everyone seemed to be at peace until we reached our destination. When I emerged from the underground subway platforms, I became comforted by familiar sights, sounds, and smells from my high school's affluent Manhattan neighborhood, Chelsea. I appreciated my high school's environment all the more because it was very little like my much less affluent home neighborhood uptown. Not only did "The City" have more shops, the Chelsea neighborhood in particular had more people outside enjoying green space than back home. I always had a desire to break the monotony of a provincial, albeit urban, home life in Co-Op City. And over time, my travels went further and grew even more distinct from my upbringing. I was raised and grew up on public transport. But even more than public transport's ability to give poor people of color the illusion of social mobility, something that my upbringing suggests, I used public transport to otherwise deliberately break free from my adolescence.

The experience of migrating and traveling in the U.S. and abroad as well as my interest in black history profoundly shaped the questions that originally interested me about taxis in South Africa. Reading widely, I quickly learned that many of the questions that interested me had been answered by a rich tradition of liberal social science from the 1990s, which charted how the "black taxi" emerged and how it came to be the most popular form of public transportation in the country. Perhaps because the literature framed it within the era of South African apartheid, the history of the taxi and the story it left in the archive deeply moved me. As the narrative goes, some black South Africans developed taxis as a way to cope with the fact that the Group Areas Act displaced them from city centers, forcing them to travel long-distances on modes of transport that were in conformance with white supremacy.¹⁷ Taking advantage of various loopholes in the law, black entrepreneurs were able to transform private cars and vans into modes of public transport, and to satisfy yet another unintended consequence of apartheid. Interestingly, such transport modes provided a perfect opportunity to meaningfully resist apartheid. This narrative is so powerful that the South African National Taxi Council continues to reproduce this story of struggle and resistance in its literature and on its website: "Th[e] flexibility and convenience of minibus taxis compared with the rigidity of bus and rail services resulted in a rapid growth in popularity and use of the minibus taxis."¹⁸ But more importantly for me at the time, "This trend was strengthened by the identity of commuters

¹⁷ For an overview of the linkages between public transport planning and apartheid, see McCaul, *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry*; John Western, *Outcast Cape Town* (Berkeley: Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

¹⁸ South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO), "History of the Taxi Industry," <http://www.transportsig.com/index.php/sponsor-news/sa-transport-related-bodies/167-south-african-national-taxi-council-SANTACO.html>.

with an industry perceived to be a black empowerment success story in the face of apartheid government suppression of black entrepreneurship."¹⁹ As a black American student committed to racial solidarity and social justice, I understood the history of taxi as a success story of black resilience in the face of a racist state. And as a student of history, I delighted in thinking about the taxi story alongside the history of decolonization and other "revolutionary" moments in the modern era, particularly in relation to the stories of black liberation in the U.S.²⁰ But what never once caught my attention were the flipsides of the story – not just the taxi wars, but what the taxi revolution could never say about the question of gender and sexuality. When locals warned me to never take a taxi at night, I never thought for one second that they had appraised me as particularly “vulnerable,” let alone how “vulnerability” itself is raced, classed, gendered, and sexualized in profound ways.

By taking a cue from postcolonial theory, and particularly my reading of anthropologist David Scott in tandem with the agendas of postcolonial theory, I recognized more recently that my initial interests in taxi history had been intimately shaped by my positionality as a particular modern subject whose mobility was incubated in a complex political economic and intellectual milieu. Scott explains, “the modern age unleashed forces that sought not merely to extract forms of tribute or impose asymmetrical patterns of exchange, but to forcibly – and very often violently – destroy

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ These observations connecting United States and South African contexts were informed by the following comparative historical work: George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

old ways of social and moral and political life and build upon new ones.”²¹ I am certain that South African artist Athi-Patra Ruga recognized some of these “old ways” in *After He Left...*, which I will discuss later in Chapter 4. I am not prepared at this moment to make an argument, but I wonder about the extent to which Ruga views some of these destroyed “old ways” as moments of sociality unburdened by hetero-patriarchies. One cannot help but keep this question in the back of one’s head as the (un)Africanness of homosexuality debate rages on.²²

Today, I wonder if I am now not also called to interrogate my intellectual biography precisely because of the same political economic constraints that have impressed upon my object of study. Thus, I have arrived now at thinking about the taxi less as a product of a type of resistance mechanism, and more as a particular configuration of neoliberalism, which could not only be easily absorbed into a narrative of resistance felt throughout the African diaspora, but that could also, in a sense, pick its battles, despite the risks. So, by making a move to link my intellectual biography to my object of study through ethnography and other inquiry, and as a means to pose different questions of taxi history, I want to foreground again the anxiety that emerges when the promise of nationalism fails. When we begin with a recognition of constraint, then it may be useful to engage in a performance of the ways we actually might not fit into the dominant paradigms we aim to critique. This may also mean adopting Ruga, and also Columbia University’s Jack (Judith) Halberstam’s project of failure and “investing in

²¹ Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, 117.

²² For an overview of the debate, see Neville Hoad, *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

counterintuitive modes of knowing.”²³ I think this is precisely where queer theory can be instructive to postcolonial theory, and I want to move towards a queering of taxi history as a way of posing different questions about the minibus taxi that not only engages the question of failure, which is so central to the taxi story, but that also pushes us beyond it, particularly by inserting our own queer selves in the driver’s seat.

²³ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 11.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction: Dispossession, Displacement, and the Making of the Shared Minibus Taxi in South Africa

This dissertation interrogates the growth of shared minibus taxi vehicles in South Africa over the course of the 20th century – along with their antecedents – to show how a century of forced removals targeting black South Africans in diverse rural and urban communities, homes, and homesteads, and forcibly relocating them to impoverished ghettos created a “black taxi” revolution (BTR) in late 1970s and early 1980s, while also undergirding a pandemic of “black-on-black” “taxi wars” in the twilight of the racist apartheid regime. In today’s transport technology boom, few remember the history of South Africa’s shared minibus taxi industry, a black entrepreneurial powerhouse inadvertently catalyzed by South Africa’s racist and repressive apartheid state. The 16-passenger shared minibus taxi vehicles were created and increasingly manufactured and marketed to buyers in late 1970s, but had historical antecedents at the turn of the 20th century, as a response to forced removals, racial segregation, and poverty in the urban ghettos the apartheid state created for displaced black South Africans. Within this environment, taxi operators struggled to get their businesses off the ground in an apartheid economy that privileged private and SATS-backed (read “white”) modes of transport – i.e. buses and trains – and that undercut and forbade black enterprise anywhere but in the homelands. But through diligence and racial solidarity, the taxi industry grew to become the black-owned and operated transport powerhouse it has been since the late 1980s. This is the story of one of South Africa’s revolutionary black

enterprises, a story that turned sour in the 1990s with the proliferation of the Taxi Wars.²⁴ Although few retell the narrative of “the black taxi revolution” now, the story of a successful black business in sub-Saharan Africa in the face of colonial and apartheid restrictions and oppression continues to inspire models of development through entrepreneurship.²⁵ Moreover, the taxi story still figures into a collective memory of the struggle against apartheid.²⁶

The BTR story was inaugurated in the mainstream white press in December 1983 when Adriaan Eksteen, the then Director General of Transport, was quoted as saying that “minibuses do have their place in the sun.”²⁷ In 1990, the “revolutionary” taxi industry gained the attention of many scholars, whose work I discuss in the historiography section of this Introduction. These scholars applauded taxis as one of the very few enterprises that, despite all odds, were transformed from a marginal and disjointed set of small-scale businesses in the 1950s and 1960s into a multi-billion Rand industry by the 1980s and 1990s.²⁸ The growth of taxis could have been viewed for even the casual observer of South African history from abroad as particularly remarkable, considering that the taxi industry was a predominantly black-owned and operated enterprise that had serviced poor black urban communities all throughout the country over the course of the apartheid

²⁴ Jackie Dugard, "Drive On? An Analysis of the Deregulation of the South African Taxi Industry and the Emergence of the Subsequent 'Taxi Wars'" (University of Cambridge, 1996).

²⁵ Karol Boudreaux, "Taxing Alternatives: Poverty Alleviation and the South African Taxi/Minibus Industry," *Minibus Industry (February 2006)* (2006).

²⁶ Interview with Vusi Shongwe, published in "Mec Former Taxi Operator," *Taxindaba* October/November 2013.

²⁷ August 14, 1987 *Financial Mail* article quoted in McCaul, *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry*.

²⁸ Joel Barolsky, *The Black Taxi Industry: Origins and Structure* (Wits Business School, 1990).

regime.²⁹ This narrative of revolutionary growth has been so influential that it continues to be retold today in forums such as the “History” section of the South African Taxi Council (SANTACO) website. “[Because] the apartheid land act dispossessed the majority of people off their land and forced them into the urban labour market,” SANTACO writes, “the emergence of this industry was both an opportunity for black people to advance economically under very trying circumstances, as well as to provide a service to our people.”³⁰ Thus, what has made and continues to make the history of the taxi revolution so attractive for some is the way it encapsulates the ANC’s dominant narrative of their role in the struggle against apartheid.³¹ Indeed, this dominant resistance narrative of anti-apartheid South African nationalism resonates with other decolonization movements throughout the continent.

It was only a year before the apartheid regime’s end in 1994 when South Africa’s Committee Investigating Public Violence and Intimidation in the Taxi Industry published one of their last interim reports – a years-long product of quantitative and qualitative research in dispossessed and displaced rural and urban black communities all over the country – a report whose sole purpose was to help end interspersed conflicts (namely, the Taxi Wars), which had by then killed thousands of people. R. J. Goldstone’s Commission

²⁹ McCaul, *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry*.

³⁰ South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO), “History of the Taxi Industry,” <http://www.transportsig.com/index.php/sponsor-news/sa-transport-related-bodies/167-south-african-national-taxi-council-SANTACO.html>.

³¹ While the struggle took on many fronts (see Bozzoli), the grand narrative of the struggle of apartheid is seen most clearly in the memoir of South Africa’s first black president. Belinda Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004); Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1995).

of Inquiry into the taxi wars determines that *apartheid* (South Africa's national policy of racial segregation from 1948-1994) was a cause.

At this point there is need to dwell, *briefly*, on *one aspect* of the problem of which the roots can be traced directly to the policy of apartheid. Under legislation enforcing apartheid, only blacks who were able to prove their permanent employment in white areas were given so-called Section 10 rights to reside legally in the white areas. Those blacks who enjoyed Section 10 rights were housed in townships from which they were transported to their places of work either by public transport if they resided close enough to walk to the stations or bus stops, or by minibus taxis whose operators were allowed, by permit, to transport passengers from places within the townships to bus stops and stations. In the wake of this arrangement, a minibus taxi industry arose *under the full authority and protection of the law*.³²

By "briefly" mentioning "one aspect" undergirding the rise of the black minibus taxi industry's rise, "under the full authority and protection of the law," the Goldstone Commission merely footnoted apartheid, precisely because it was the law of the land; state-sanctioned and, therefore, not fully to blame for the subsequent flooding of the minibus taxi market through neoliberal deregulation policies (i.e. letting taxi associations hand out licenses and police the routes on which taxis plied, usually through brute force), in order to create conflicts in black communities and destabilize the then global anti-apartheid movement.³³ It is precisely because the state deliberately obscured apartheid's direct complicity in dispossessing and displacing black people and their social and

³² D. J. Rossouw and L. S. Van Zyl, "Fifth Interim Report," ed. Committee Investigating Public Violence and Intimidation in the Taxi Industry (Cape Town: R. J. Goldstone Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation, 1993), 18.

³³ Meshack M Khosa, "Routes, Ranks and Rebels: Feuding in the Taxi Revolution," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 1 (1992); Jackie Dugard, *From Low-Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi Violence in South Africa, 1987-2000*, vol. 4 (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2001); Makubetse Sekhonyane and Jackie Dugard, "A Violent Legacy: The Taxi Industry and Government at Loggerheads," *SA Crime Quarterly*, no. 10 (2004).

economic activities that we must read with skepticism government documents and policies around transport broadly and the taxis specifically.

The four national transport decisions that were most responsible for helping to legally develop South Africa's public (road) transport system in the shadow of dispossession and displacement projects, culminating in the most significant forced removals of the 1960s, serve as the backdrop to my study. It is significant that archives name these acts and proposed amendments after the white men who chaired government transport commissions and committees responsible for researching these important transportation laws. Commissioners J. C. le Roux, Alex van Breda, Peter Welgemoed, and R. J. Goldstone were the country's executive decision-makers on formal and informal modes of public, private, and commercial transport over the entire 20th century – but, unlike black South Africans, were also men who had never in their lives been forced to use public transport because the state had forcibly relocated them to under-resourced communities. It is important to remember that it was only in 1993 – the year before the people of South Africa elected Nelson Mandela as President – when any of these commissions acknowledged the state's role in making public transport necessary for the majority black people whose mobility they impaired.³⁴ Until then, commissioners' reports and the laws that followed always represented segregation, forced removals, and black poverty as unfortunate but understandable effects of administering Black space. At no point before 1993 did the state acknowledge its role (whether by colonization, *de facto* segregation, or *de jure* apartheid) in engineering the problems that made public transport

³⁴ Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).

a necessity for its majority black population. By situating the 1930, 1977, 1983, and 1993 acts and amendments (some passed, and others never enacted), and the commissioners who made them possible, at important moments when black South Africans made enormous and everyday decisions about how to best combat their dispossession and displacement, my dissertation tells a radically different historical narrative about transport than the archives do, and offers a new vision of transport's ability to make life-worlds better for marginalized people in economies with roots in settler colonialism.

My dissertation brings together four sets of spatial and temporal incidences from the social history of South Africa to show how the country's political and racially charged land use plans in the middle of the 20th century built the public transportation network South Africans know today with respect to the large population of dispossessed and displaced people there. The geography of apartheid is premised on the separation of the races, and the unequal distribution of resources whereby blacks have less and whites have much more.³⁵ Apartheid forced less-resourced black South Africans to the peripheries of cities while investing and continuously improving human life for people living in the city's core, a space apartheid designated for whites only. Once black South Africans made homes in the townships that the state set aside for them, the concentration of ideas, people, and resources within black-designated areas created the conditions for a black taxi revolution which would forever transform the everyday lives of black South Africans.³⁶ Black taxi owners wrested the power to transport dispossessed and displaced

³⁵ A. J. Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid* (London: Routledge, 1994).

³⁶ All sorts of organizations from gangs to political parties actually emerged out of the confining conditions in townships. For example, see Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2000); Lodge.

people away from state-run and privately-owned buses, using the shared minibus taxi to generate profits for a privileged elite group of black South Africans in black communities. However, these black capitalists helped sustain the same geography which developed to disenfranchise the vast majority of black South Africans forced and never sufficiently incentivized to travel kilometers from township to town and back. Thus, it is important to distinguish each set of connected temporal and spatial incidences in order to give nuance to the triumphant story of black South Africans “sticking it” to the apartheid state and building capital in their resistance to white supremacy. As such, they grew from a fledgling, inchoate business to providing transport for approximately 625,000 commuters.³⁷ These temporal and spatial incidences include, from the narrowest to the broadest, Johannesburg from 1930-1990, Cape Town from 1900-1970, apartheid South Africa from 1948-1994, and contemporary South Africa from 1990-Present.

Johannesburg from 1930-1990 sheds light on public transport over a century after South Africa’s mineral revolution. In a city that had thrived off the backs of low-skilled, underpaid workers barred from entering the middle-class because of their race, the minibus taxi revolution’s impact on black South African life most broadly is clearly deserving of its own study. Cape Town from 1900-1970, on the other hand, tells the story of South Africa’s oldest colonial city, which began slowly restricting where black South Africans could live and work to a much greater and more violent extent than its counterparts. Cape Town’s taxi revolution did not have as profound an influence in creating a large and wide network of black transport entrepreneurs, but its influence on the laws governing all sorts of jitneys from as early as 1930 makes it an invaluable site

³⁷ McCaul, v.

for understanding the colonial politics that undergirded apartheid's segregationist policies. Contrasting the growth of the shared minibus taxi industry in these two different historical and geographical contexts helps piece together a picture of the revolution's national impact in a country as diverse as its climate. While South Africa's apartheid and contemporary eras are the broadest frameworks for understanding taxis, precisely because South Africa's varying cities such as Cape Town and Johannesburg, for example, have their own distinct histories, teasing these out helps provide a generalizable character of taxis' nationwide influence. In particular, this helps one understand how the country's most powerful decisionmakers and influencers began recognizing shared minibus taxis' influence on greater swaths of public. Finally, even while the Cape Town and South African contexts illuminate the perspectives of powerful whites, the Johannesburg context does bring into focus the shared minibus taxi's important labor history. Rather, each context sheds individual light on what powerful government officials, transport administrators, and taxi entrepreneurs did to shape both narratives of dispossession/displacement and repossession/replacement.

Dissertation Parts, Themes, Questions, and Arguments

The dissertation has several parts, including a Prologue, an Epilogue, and 2 framing arguments. Part one of my dissertation builds on the argument that dispossession and displacement drives the world's most innovative transport technologies by illuminating Cape Town's public transportation history before and after South Africa first started regulated all passenger motor-vehicles in 1930. For the purpose of this dissertation, I use dispossession and displacement as shorthand for the processes,

beginning *de facto* in 1652 and enshrined in law with apartheid's Group Areas Act of 1950 – almost 300 years later – that deprived indigenous South Africans of their spiritual connection to different lands that the apartheid government designated as whites-only space in the middle of the 20th century.³⁸ When the Dutch Empire commissioned the Dutch East India Company (VOC's) Jan van Riebeeck to secure a station at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652, indigenous hunter-gatherers and pastoralist people who occasionally

³⁸ The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines the noun dispossession as the action of dispossessing or fact of being dispossessed; deprivation of or ejection from a possession; and the casting out of an evil spirit; exorcism. South Africa shares its history of land displacement with other settler colonies throughout the world, but one of the most detailed social histories of land expropriation in early 20th century South Africa is Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1979). In a later article, Bundy also explains how the process of forced removals enabled land to be designated as whites-only spaces in the future. See, "Land, Law and Power: Forced Removals in Historical Context," in *No Place to Rest: Forced Removals and the Law in South Africa*, ed. Christina Murray and Catherine O'Regan (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1990). Combined with the establishment of van Riebeeck's 17th century colonial station society, the state's decision to appropriate dynamic animal pastures and hunting grounds used by all sorts of indigenous South Africans and turn them into private property effected what the OED describes as displacement, which is the simultaneous removal of a thing from its original place and action of putting something else in its place. In many ways, the entire drama of settler colonialism and apartheid are completely encapsulated by South Africa's story of creating a dispossessed and displaced community of workers who depend on walking tremendous distances whose only tax is time or who pay fares to shorten the time it takes to travel to and from. All this said, the OED never describes the subject of dispossession and displacement – that is, who or what is doing the dispossessing and the displacing. Rather, OED's definitions of the verbs dispossess and displace open up the analytical space to ask precisely who or what's responsible for putting things and people out of place and possession. For scholars of transportation (and what is especially true for public transport scholars) asking the question of how displaced and dispossessed people move between the spaces most critical for them surviving complex life-worlds in the modern era also raises the question, at least for me, of who or what displaced and dispossessed those people in the first place. For more on how women users of public transport figures into the sociological model of life-worlds, see Jeff Turner and Philip Fouracre, "Women and Transport in Developing Countries," *Transport Reviews* 15, no. 1 (1995). For a deeper exploration of the philosophy underpinning lifeworlds theory, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

found community, food, and even leisure on Africa's south-westernmost tip also found themselves increasingly losing easy access to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. The greatest beneficiaries of apartheid, and the European settlers and merchants before them used their hegemonic power to decide and enforce where every person could dwell in a South African context, basing their decisions on now scientifically disproven categories of race: white, black, Indian, and Coloured. I also use displacement and dispossession to highlight how the apartheid regime in 1948 began to use building and road demolition and construction, as well as a thriving mining economy, to manufacture passenger buses of all sizes with the intent to turn adult women and men in urban black communities into mere users of state resources (as few as they were) and prevent them from being makers in their own right.

Part Two of the dissertation sheds light on Johannesburg's (c.1970-2010) taxi history to show how black minibus taxi operators' efforts to repossess the most popular modes of transport for dispossessed and displaced people, and replace transportation modes that the apartheid state established, helped ameliorate impaired mobility with minibus taxis – a setting where a neoliberal world order eventually found new ways to dispossess and displace, albeit now on the terms of gender and sexuality, and not simply on race and class. Thus, for the purpose of this dissertation, I use repossession and replacement as shorthand for the 50-year historical process of legislation that began with the 1930 Motor Carrier Transport Act, that set in motion the efforts of a group of determined, dispossessed, and displaced black individuals, men and women, to find work and sometimes great business success buying, leasing, driving, and managing individual as well as fleets of taxis, in a variety of dynamic roles shifting between owning,

operating, consulting, and brokering jitneys ridden primarily by the country's majority black populations. This culminated in a Black Taxi Revolution (a term that I borrow from Meshack Khosa), where hundreds of black men and women successfully secured taxi licenses between 1977-1986 because of a loophole in a law that permitted any mentally and physically fit person to operate a 10-passenger vehicle in exchange for a fare. This law was originally designed to better clarify and inscribe into law restrictions on who can use motor vehicles to generate a taxable income, as well as the distinction between buses and cars to better tax a wider, albeit more specific, network of vehicles. However, the growing number of such vehicles, combined with the unprecedented number of forced-removals in South Africa's booming post-WWII economy, provided black taxi workers the supply to satisfy the growing need for car and small bus transport solutions in impoverished black communities. Otherwise, the numbers of dispossessed and displaced black workers – whose numbers swelled from forced removals from city centers – would cause them to seek transport recourse from the state.

Since before history in South Africa, land, plants, and animals were understood by the indigenous as God-given resources, guaranteed to be replenished despite seasonable and erratic changes in the natural environment by laboring in tandem with ancestral spirits. Van Riebeeck's presence in the 17th century – and the efforts of his successors – profoundly displaced indigenous peoples', the gods they worshiped, and their descendants for generations to come. Were it not for the larger 250-year contest over the ability to exist, settle on, and extract resources from this corner of the world, Cape Town and Johannesburg's transport history – involving as it did large and small commuter buses South Africa that, in turn, demonstrated exponential growth rates in the

1960s satisfying transport demand for hundreds of thousands recently displaced and dispossessed people – probably would have looked less fraught. Indeed, were it not for the ways VOC company members and British imperialists administered Cape Town, or for those Afrikaner nationalists who ruled afterwards (who, in turn, fought with British imperialists to claim the land on which Johannesburg sat as God-given private property, fortifying settlements on the most desirable terrains, and creating, legislating, and rolling out ways to run a vast colony that thrived on mobilizing indigenous South Africans as a migrant labor source), the shared minibus taxi would have never had the demand it did in the growing number of black neighborhoods ghettos built on the area's least desirable terrains. Cape Town's history shows how apartheid's 1950 Group Areas Act created and violently enforced measures to build racially segregated neighborhoods, while also encouraging the government to work with industry to create fleets of multi-passenger vehicles to appease the dispossessed and displaced black majority from protesting their relocation far from the workplaces that once enjoyed less restrictive access.

Johannesburg's history demonstrates how its situation at the center of the nation's economy could catalyze new ways for black South Africans to use capitalism to eke out relatively small returns in an economy that all but guaranteed black loss of wages, and the dissolution of generational wealth around land, and safety and security. Despite attempts to dissuade black political organizing such as reducing bus fares in state transport, for example, South Africa could not completely determine the ways black township communities would use the passenger vehicles the state provided. In fact, the history of the country's shared minibus taxi industry is really the story of how a black elite claimed

one form of passenger vehicle as their own, imbued it with the banner of liberation, and made it work in service of apartheid under the guise of working “for the people.”

Why dispossession/displacement and repossession/replacement neither frame nor set in motion histories of transportation anywhere else in the world is a dilemma my dissertation attempts to resolve. Many argue transport solves social and economic problems. It gives rural women in the developing world access to local and international markets, for example.³⁹ It provides jobs for the unemployed.⁴⁰ It provides a sense of freedom in a world with so many constraints against the marginalized.⁴¹ Rarely do scholars seek to understand, however, what in the first place caused the problems transport seeks to fix; the interplay between space, place, and power, which, together, make public transport⁴² necessary. For instance, would there be minibus taxis if there were no ghettos in South Africa’s cities? Would black South Africans need to scrape and save to buy automobiles, machines that depreciate immediately, if apartheid had not designated city centers for whites only, or if city spaces did not reflect that legacy of social and urban engineering until today?⁴³ Ignoring historical genealogies of transport obscures the forces of dispossession and displacement that created poor people’s need to

³⁹ Turner and Fouracre.

⁴⁰ Karol Boudreaux, "Taxing Alternatives: Poverty Alleviation and the South African Taxi/Minibus Industry," *Minibus Industry (February 2006)* (2006).

⁴¹ Jim Conley and Arlene Tigar McLaren, eds., *Car Troubles: Critical Studies of Automobility and Auto-Mobility* (Farnham, England and Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate Publishing, 2009).

⁴² Here I define “public transport” as those means of electric or motorized transport that governments and companies create and run to defray the social and economic costs commuters spend to move around particular geographies.

⁴³ I answer this questions in thesis Chapters 2 and 3. While it’s impossible to know if minibus taxis would have emerged without apartheid, the historical record clearly shows that apartheid made public transport for working-class people of color absolutely necessary.

pay for public transport to travel places in the first place. I view transport and transportation, particularly when they are made “public,” as futures made possible by past spatial and racial injustices. Why do the transport revolutions of the world continue to be eclipsed by the violent processes of colonialism, economic inequality, and environmental degradation, each of which has made “better transport” *the* universal panacea for the world’s geographic, economic, social, and environmental ills?⁴⁴

Travel by jitney⁴⁵ in the Global South is ubiquitous precisely because most developing cities are poor and cities serve poor people worse than they do anyone else; they are, by historian Kenda Mutongi’s estimation of African cities such as Nairobi, as “areas with uneven development, popular economies, and a large-scale need for public transportation.”⁴⁶ But it was colonial dispossession and displacement that made the “need” to take a bus, train, or jitney inevitable. While powerful politicians and capitalists use innovations in transport to “solve” inequality, I contend that “public transport” should be considered two sides of the same coin of mobility impairment,⁴⁷ especially considering how the newest transport projects are envisioned to take rich people to the

⁴⁴ For an example of transport as social problem-solver, as well as the capitalist philanthropist entrepreneurs behind solving social problems with transport, see Ashlee Vance, *Elon Musk: Tesla, SpaceX, and the Quest for a Fantastic Future* (New York: Ecco Press, 2015).

⁴⁵ “Jitneys” describe informal public transport, which poor people create with little help from the state and private companies, to charge other poor, dispossessed, and displaced people a fare to travel in places built on inequality. Robert Cervero, *The Transit Metropolis: A Global Inquiry* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1998).

⁴⁶ Kenda Mutongi, *Matatu: A History of Popular Transportation in Nairobi* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), 6.

⁴⁷ “Mobility maiming” is probably an even better formulation of the way colonialism disabled colonized people’s bodies in order to make them dependent on the colonial state. Puar.

planet Mars, and not to permit mothers to pick up their child from daycare.⁴⁸ Both transport problems and public transportation solutions are signifiers of disparities in an unequal world, not simply a problem of travel that the poor choose to take. Viewing past and present transportation innovations as part of a long story of the powerful impeding the powerless' ability to move freely means we need more histories of transportation that recognize transportation's place in the history of colonialism, if we truly believe we can engineer transport (in any form) to solve, and *not* exacerbate, social, economic, environmental problems.

Historiography and Theories Underpinning Thesis

By bringing 21st century concerns about reconciliation into a 20th century history project, and theorizing minibus taxi repossession and replacement alongside apartheid dispossession and displacement, my thesis builds on historian, Allen F., and attorney, Barbara S., Isaacman's conception of displacement in their study of Mozambique's Cahora Bassa dam. The Isaacmans employed the term analytically to recover the experiences of people who are often left out of history books, to retell the story of forced removals that opened space for dam creation, and to interpret peasant intellectual epistemologies of environmental change (particularly, stories of dam-induced flooding).⁴⁹ For the Isaacmans, "to shift someone or something from its customary location," means centering rarely examined frameworks from the perspectives of ordinary people. Their

⁴⁸ Vance.

⁴⁹ Allen F. Isaacman and Barbara S. Isaacman, *Dams, Displacement, and the Delusion of Development: Cahora Bassa and Its Legacies in Mozambique, 1965–2007* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), 19; Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

formulation of displacement allowed the Isaacmans to center the environment – something that has typically been treated as devoid of the deeply spiritual meanings with which African agricultural communities imbue the land, particularly in displaced Southern African communities.⁵⁰ Also, by centering peasant experiences, the Isaacmans contrast longstanding (sometimes pre-colonial) environmental epistemologies with multi-national capitalist projects such as hydro-electric dam-making. Had dam builders contacted Zambezi peasants in the planning stages, then the peasants would have likely told the builders of the natural (environmental), societal, and spiritual consequences of controlling the Zambezi’s flow for the sole purpose of natural resource exploitation. Peasant stories of hardship after being forcibly removed also tell a different story from that of Portuguese colonialists and their multi-national trading partners. Suppressing narratives of the poor and dispossessed continued even after Mozambique’s independence, the Isaacmans contend. While the Isaacmans’ study has incredible implications for large-scale development (they argue, importantly, “violence *regularly accompanies* massive infrastructural projects, such as dams”⁵¹), my study ends in the 21st century to take some of the newest capitalist projects, particularly ride-sharing in the gig economy, to task. As the Isaacmans attempt to recover and analyze contested history in one important world region (Southern Africa), tech billionaires such as Elon Musk and the Zuckerberg-Changs of the world prioritize changing and potentially disrupting human life globally; and not just through infrastructure, but also through how people relate to each other. Therefore, by ending the story of how the rich and powerful provided

⁵⁰ For example, see Jacob A. Tropp, *Natures of Colonial Change: Environmental Relations in the Making of the Transkei* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006).

⁵¹ Isaacman and Isaacman, 21.

transport to build inequality with social media technologies such as Uber, my thesis uses a different Southern African case study to globalize and contemporize the Isaacmans' displacement formulation even further, and illuminate how black taxi operators' struggles for repossession and replacement show the opportunities and limits of the powerless' ability to resist these globalizing forces.

My approach to interrogating South Africa's minibus taxis and public transport globally through structures of spatial, social, and economic oppression, therefore, raises important questions about subjugation on the one hand, and resistance and agency on the other. In fact, the literature on transport in South African historiography could be divided into two intellectual camps: those who write on transport to illuminate its oppressive forces, and those who write on transport to illuminate how ordinary people contest oppressive forces. Moreover, the two camps are further divided by the lens through which they examine transport. While some see transport's rhythms of displacement and dispossession as a top-down phenomenon, others are more concerned with how the everyday and extraordinary activities of commuters and drivers transform transport from the bottom-up. I find both approaches useful analytically. What I am calling "transport's displacement and dispossession rhythms" were always meant to be composed and conducted by the state and played out by a chorus of players. "Agency," within this framework might appear that musicians play the right notes because they love them, find them beautiful, and want to do a good job. But agency could also look and sound as if someone in the orchestra is playing a completely different tune, distracting the other musicians, and demonstrating that individual's ability to disrupt order to effect change. My concerns differ from the historiography on transport in South Africa because the

questions of agency and resistance that I research consider the extent to which the individual player contributes to the longevity of transport's displacement and dispossession rhythms, or slows them down. Before proceeding with my review of how the transport literature contributed to both sides of the public transport debate – i.e. oppression v. resistance – it is worth writing that the resources cities invest in some actions and intentions over others is what will prove decisive in future public transport reform.

The extent to which modern South Africa's various transportation modes (i.e. buses, taxis, and trains) encouraged further oppression or enabled opportunities for resistance was debated fiercely by scholars writing on bus subsidies, bus boycotts, neoliberalism and deregulation, social engineering, the social composition of drivers and commuters, and other historical and contemporary topics in the 1980s – each of which was critical to understanding the potential for public transport to make life better or worse for South Africans. Gordon Pirie, for example, argued that urban Johannesburg's transport-labor regime developed with the assistance of the African commuter working-class.⁵² Johannesburg transport, for Pirie, widened the scope of how transport-labor regimes came about in South Africa. In so doing, Pirie importantly portrayed African commuters as agents and not simply victims of the apartheid-era urban geographies shaping the world around them. Pirie located the agency of South Africa's commuting classes in the pre-1945 provisions for transport from townships to cities. Because initial provisions were below community standards, commuters forced municipal authorities to

⁵² Gordon H Pirie, "Johannesburg Transport 1905-1945: African Capitulation and Resistance," *Journal of Historical Geography* 12, no. 1 (1986).

make transport more convenient for them. The significant strength of Pirie's analysis was his focus on women domestic laborer's intimate connections to their madam's networks. Pirie's archive opened up gendered relations as a significant component of the African working-class commuter's agency. Whatever the case, throughout the rolling out of each new mode of transport and transport facilities, Pirie showed that workers made demands and forced cities and transport companies to respond. From Pirie's perspective, the well-publicized and -studied bus boycotts of the 1930s and 1940s, therefore, did not emerge as the first response to transport grievances. The most visible manifestations of expressing the transport discomfort commuters always felt were organized, larger-scale protests (i.e. bus boycotts). The social history of everyday protest, Pirie showed, makes it difficult to see apartheid transport's regime of displacement and dispossession as solely a top-down phenomenon.

Witnessing South Africa's apartheid-era history of bus boycotts emerging again at the very same time (1985) Pirie was thinking about the bottom-up nature of transport reform, Jeffrey McCarthy and Mark Swilling argued that the 1983 Welgemoed Commission's attempt to protect bus revenue from the minibus taxi revolution replicated the way the apartheid state worked with private bus companies to orchestrate black workers' mobility and black taxi drivers' entrepreneurial activities.⁵³ Building on Pirie's observations, McCarthy and Swilling took the side of progressive opponents to the apartheid regime who argued that apartheid's grand policies of forced removal and parastatal transit were too contradictory to work in the long run and that greater attention

⁵³ Jeffrey J McCarthy and Mark Swilling, "South Africa's Emerging Politics of Bus Transportation," *Political Geography Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (1985).

should be paid to black progressive activities. Unlike Pirie, however, McCarthy and Swilling drew closer attention to the nation's re-emerging bus boycotts in the 1980s. Believing the apartheid regime would end before the turn of the millennium, McCarthy and Swilling identified bus boycotts as important incubators of black, post-apartheid political thought. Reverberating bus boycotts (first in the 1930s, and then in the 1980s) signaled, for them, black-led, grassroots strategies for a more equitable and democratic future South Africa. The weakness inherent to their study, however, was how class politics flattened every other form of difference. Scholars such as Pirie remind us that gender played an important role in transport protests across the middle of the 20th century. The blind spot of bus boycott studies at the time was its sole focus on race and class politics, and very little attention to gender. Moreover, looking solely at a non-gendered black working-class obscured the cultural life of bus boycotts, travel and transport, and business-mindedness that taxis as a cultural device encapsulated, and which this dissertation also tries to recover.

Bus boycotts have been possibly the most important driver of changes to the transport experience for commuters over the 20th century. When did commuters realize that organizing collectively would change how they experienced transport? Some sense of public ownership would have had to replace the complacent ideas such as, “we’re just lucky to have any transport at all.” Early records show that individual disagreements over fares underlined more organized movements to boycott; “we either pay a lower fare or we withdraw our business.” I’m reminded of an earlier finding detailing a middle-class woman’s attempt to convince a stagecoach driver to exempt one of her children from paying any fare at all. I personally saw New Yorkers negotiating their public transport

fares all the time as I grew up. I also distinctly remember bus drivers' visible worry that mothers would lie about their children's age to get a free pass for their child to ride the bus. This very simple negotiation mothers initiated in order to either subsidize or defray the costs of domestic labor (raising children with few external resources to help) while managing household expenses, could eventually frame policies. Gordon Pirie reminds us, for example, that the smallest instances of commuters' complaints shaped transport policies to a greater extent than state-driven efforts.

I reflect on parenting – on mothering, in particular – as I begin the story of bus boycotts in urban communities of color because it genders how public transport policies most likely come about, and highlights one basic question on transport archival materials: “How old must a person be to pay a full fare?” Answering this question highlights a rather complex and philosophical cost-benefit analysis, leading us to distinct historical questions about public/mass/shared transport's longer history. For example, why should transport cost any money at all? Are fares a tax? A transport operator drives from point A to B and back again, day in and day night, so if a commuter wants to join the caravan, then they need to pay. Are fares a guest's gift to their host? A transport operator invites a commuter into their caravan, so the commuter offers the operator a fare in appreciation, and the operator gives the commuter a lift and a show. Before we ask why fares are “fares” to begin with, it's important to recognize how “fare,” simultaneously, an 11th century term for an itinerary of travel, a 15th century term for the cost a shipman charges to carry goods, and a 16th century term for the number of piglets a mother pig births (a portion of which could be paid in taxes) went from being a suggestion, to an expectation,

to an absolute requirement – so required that commuters feel any sense to negotiate because their suggestions as consumers mattered.

Beginning our line of inquiry with “how old must a person be to pay a full fare” raises multitudinous situations that mothers and domestic laborers would have to have some understanding of before joining a bus boycott. Imagine four “beings” board a bus: a woman 8-months pregnant with twin babies in utero, and the 1-year old the woman carries on her back. Does the operator charge the woman four full fares, one full fare, or something in between? The faster transport fare transactions become, the harder it becomes to negotiate complex fare structures that the mother poses. What rules need to be established so that fare transactions are quick, easy, efficient, and fair for passengers, operators, and owners? And once standards are put in place, how do fare rules consider all sorts of nuances and contingencies that ensure commuters are unable to advantage of the operators and owners, and vice versa? When I worked in retail, I learned that the two most important parts of a manager’s job was to make sure sales associates sold a certain number of items, while specialized “team members” prevented the loss of items. In other words, retail profits factored in theft. It was an understanding that shoppers will steal a percentage of goods. And while managers cannot ensure they will never lose any inventory, they work to reduce the chance of losing too much, as their profits begin to take the “hit.” Public transport, too, must factor in loss, because making adequate gains over losses helps differentiate successful public transport operations from others.

Pirie argues that segregation in Cape Town’s trains was not inevitable. Rather, incessant organized and disorganized complaining about transport accommodations by persons of all races, white defensiveness regarding petty segregation (such as signs with

the notice “reserved”), the growing number of black passengers paying more to ride in first class accommodations, and reluctant measures to segregate trains outright gave segregationists enough momentum to cling to the 1948 National Party election and roll out *de jure* segregation on trains. Shortly after May 1948, first class carriages were designated for whites only and policed as such. Black and Coloured commuters became even more vocal about accommodations, but Supreme Court decisions prevented grassroots resistance from materializing in Cape Town. Upholding the new national law preventing any sort of racial mixing, each branch of the new South African government worked together to segregate commuter trains all throughout the country. Pirie’s analysis follows his other writings where political activity from blacks, Coloureds, and Indians forced the national government to keep changing its transport accommodations and policies. However, Pirie’s “Rolling Segregation” marks 1948 as the central moment in which segregated transport evolved into what was documented in the 1992 article. In so doing, Pirie sideswipes the entire Goldstone Commission issue by revealing the great impact formal national policies had on local transport conditions. It seems clear from Pirie’s point of view that national policy for transport will be crucial to make commuting more equitable for South Africans all over the country.

Public intellectual and consultant Dr. Meshack Khosa has argued that the boundaries the apartheid state created at the municipal and national levels played out inside black townships, took on an increasingly ethnicized character, and led to bloody results. Unlike Pirie, Khosa blamed apartheid’s unethical social and spatial engineering projects for the widespread discontent among the urban working poor. In other words, spatial dispossession and displacement was all apartheid’s fault, and commuters never

had agency in promoting the modes of transportation that developed under apartheid. Taking up the horrific and pervasive taxi wars of the early 1990s as his case study, Khosa explained that the state's neoliberal move to deregulate the taxi industry late in the urban planning timeline put petty taxi operators in opposition to each other.⁵⁴ The feuds, Khosa explained, were based on boundaries earlier taxi companies created to demarcate who was allowed to service which routes. When the state eased the restrictions that previously limited taxi operations to a small select class of driver, a rush for taxi licenses ensued. However, veteran taxi drivers who laid claim to specific routes before deregulation defended their territories. "Rebels," the term Khosa employs, in opposition, undercut veterans' claims, choosing to compete with other taxis by working the exact same routes. In the violent atmosphere of the couple of years leading up to the end of apartheid, these route rivalries became embroiled in combat.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Khosa, "Routes, Ranks and Rebels: Feuding in the Taxi Revolution." One can see from the types of laws passed to make taxis possible between 1930 and 1977, transport was highly regulated by the government to ensure that every train, bus, and car could work well together for the greatest benefit of the national economy. "Deregulation" signals a shift in the highly regulated character of transport in South Africa because it meant limiting or removing transport laws with the intention of letting the transport market work out its rules of engagement and exchange on its own. Between 1983-1993, drivers operating minibus taxis and commuters riding them exploded to the point of making deregulation seem like the only option for making taxis work with the systems of railroads and buses that majority-white owners and directors that seemed to be struggling to compete. While the deregulation debate was rooted in economic realities, the history of dispossession/repossession and displacement/replacement in South Africa's system of transportation, both public and private, meant that deregulation also had serious racial implications, which my thesis examines in the fifth chapter. For more on economic and legislative implications on deregulation, see McCaul, 97-116.

⁵⁵ These so-called "taxi wars" were, of course, more complicated than the literature made them out to be. Chapter 5 uses the 1992-1994 Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Violence and Intimidation to reveal the structural inequalities of apartheid that better illuminate the taxi wars' roots better than petty route rivalries could.

Government concerns as to who would dominate the business of black taxis, and the extent to which either the state or black entrepreneurs and ordinary people were responsible for the Taxi Wars, shaped most taxi and transport studies in South Africa from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s.⁵⁶ With a little more distance from policy implications and a commitment to examining how public transport could be used as a tool of oppression, scholars like Jackie Dugard remained skeptical of the government legislation to ease restrictions for the benefit of minibus taxi owners.⁵⁷ Years before his most important article on the taxi wars, "Routes, Ranks, and Rebels," Khosa (1992) was concerned with combating the myth that efforts to assist black South Africans in their commutes was ever in the commuters' own interests. Khosa interrogated, for example, the monies the government set aside for employers to subsidize commuter's bus transport from townships to their places of work. Khosa argued that the government's granting of subsidies to black workers' employers generated a "kitty" for two purposes. While employers used the "kitty" to attract black laborers (i.e. workers who were removed from the urban core to cities' peripheries), the money really only served to rollback black resistance to being removed so far from their workplaces in the first place.⁵⁸ Khosa's analysis completely shattered Pirie's claims that black workers' constant complaints

⁵⁶ See, for example Rossouw and Van Zyl.

⁵⁷ While Khosa's research and government studies were being conducted at the time of some of the most violent taxi wars, it was Jackie Dugard's research for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation provided the most detailed account of the apartheid government's hidden hand in fomenting so-called "black-on-black" conflict as part of its campaign to undermine the legitimacy of black political organization, all of which erupting into what has since been called the "Taxi Wars." Dugard, *From Low-Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi Violence in South Africa, 1987-2000*, 4.

⁵⁸ Khosa, "Changing Patterns of 'Black' Bus Subsidies in the Apartheid City, 1944–1986."

about poor transport facilities forced bus companies and the government's hand to improve commuting conditions. Bus subsidies, Khosa specified, remained one hidden way (hidden to black workers at least) the South African government endeavored to coopt black workers to live far from their workplaces and seek out employers who offered more affordable commuting options. Like beer halls and bottle stores set up by the government as places (strategically located near taxi/bus ranks and train stations) where commuting workers might waste their earnings upon return to the townships, and whose profits were cynically used in order to fund the Department of Bantu Affairs and the administration of black townships, the subsidies never benefitted commuters.⁵⁹

At the same time Pirie was committed to broadening the scope of bus boycotts to show African commuters as agents of transport reform, Khosa shared how the government continued to collaborate with apartheid-era employers to depoliticize transport.⁶⁰ Khosa's emphasis on gender, in addition to race and class, was important in doing so. While city work was limited to African men in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the government increasingly yielded to the work demands of urban African women. Building on the hidden ways the state colluded with capital to disenfranchise black people and poor people in the 1970s and 1980s, Khosa explained that the government offered subsidies to women in order to quell their protests and legitimize apartheid's socio-spatial

⁵⁹ Pohlandt-McCormick. para. 311.

⁶⁰ To be clear, when I say the "depoliticization of transport," I mean the ways the state and capital made commuters forget that the commute itself was based on racist city plans, which ensured that black people would live far away from their places of work only because they were black. Transport is "political" when black people realize that transport only exists because of colonial, racialized dispossession and displacement.

engineering project.⁶¹ For Khosa, bus subsidies played a larger role in the transport drama than African workers' protests precisely because they reflected the particular way transport was not only racialized and classed, but also gendered. Capital-state collusion, for Khosa, was not accidental. Again, just as the state ensured that African townships had access to liquor and bars – i.e. granting small concessions to ameliorate enormous social traumas such as forced labor – subsidies were also part of several well-honed strategies apartheid used to *try* and make African workers (commuters in this case) forget the histories behind their oppression. While the majority of taxi studies identify the apartheid strategy to engineer oppression, few have paid attention to the gendered diversity of African communities, which the state and its agents identified and exploited to deepen ignorance, and “divide and rule,” a familiar colonial strategy.⁶²

Precisely because scholars from all racial, ethnic, and citizenship backgrounds became interested in more nuanced studies that disclosed how commuters and black transport entrepreneurs began to contest their spatial oppression, taxi studies flourished in progressive intellectual circles because the black taxi revolution (BTR) signaled a hope for a future, more equitable, black-led government. Through a particularly triumphalist narrative, Joel Barolsky, a white management consultant and Wits School of Business graduate (he now lives in Melbourne, Australia), argued that South Africa's minibus taxis are important objects of inquiry because they edged out buses to become black commuters' most popular form of transport. Minibus-taxis emerged, Barolsky explained, not only because apartheid policies removed black workers too far from their workplaces,

⁶¹ Khosa, "Changing Patterns of 'Black' Bus Subsidies in the Apartheid City, 1944–1986."

⁶² Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 316-27.

but also because bus boycotters made operating buses in black townships too politicized and dangerous. Refusing to politicize transport any further, taxi elites lobbied the apartheid-era Department of Transport to protect the taxi business because they were doing a better job transporting people from their homes to work, better than the buses that the government funded through employer subsidies. Moreover, minibus taxis increased black participation in the apartheid economy. Barolsky witnessed how combined efforts from commuters and taxi business people alike made taxi driving seem like a lucrative career.⁶³ In so doing, Barolsky joined Pirie in promoting an optimistic vision of black people's grassroots' participation in political and economic transport reform. Like the small-scale protesters who complained and agitated to make change, Barolsky believed that taxi entrepreneurs along with their clientele put pressure on the government to make transit and taxi entrepreneurship easier for black South Africans. The strength of Barolsky's argument lay in the way he brought together data, rather than media sources, to detail the successes of the industry. The weakness was that he seemed to take the marketing strategies of the Southern African Black Taxi Association (SABTA) and other powerful taxi associations at face value. The narrative SABTA promoted, however, relegated the majority of unregistered (called "illegal") taxis to the realm of being pirates. In any case, Barolsky certainly portrayed taxis as a significant player in urban transport and entrepreneurship opportunities in typically underserved black communities. Barolsky's was a powerful narrative in the waning years of apartheid. "Follow That

⁶³ Joel Barolsky, "Follow That Taxi: Success Story of the Informal Sector," *Indicator South Africa* 7, no. 2 (1990).

Taxi!” for Barolsky, was a call to pay attention to the minibus taxi revolution because taxis, he surmised, may be leading the country in the right direction.

Barolsky’s “Follow That Taxi!” was the exemplar of a taxi literature that marveled at the black taxi revolution from an economic growth perspective, and at a time when neoliberal economic policies were being praised across the world.⁶⁴ This optimism thrived even when neoliberal structural adjustment was failing throughout Africa and the taxi wars took the lives of black people in townships throughout South Africa. Borrowing language and statistical data from an industry rapidly losing moral ground at a turning point in South Africa’s history, studies such as Barolsky’s made some attempt to legitimate taxis at a moment when they seemed their most irredeemable.⁶⁵ Moreover, since the redemption of seemingly irredeemable persons and entities became a nationwide project through the 1996 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the taxi industry did have at least an intellectual platform on which to build its case and make civic contributions in the name of restorative justice.⁶⁶

Believing technology and intelligent urban planning could bridge the ideological impasse of public transport as either signifier of oppression or resistance, transport professionals and researchers Herrie Schalekamp and Roger Behrens (2009) explained that the utopic, reconciliatory vision of “integrated public transport” – an environment where informal and formal transport, minibus taxis and buses have designated shared

⁶⁴ See World Bank, “Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action,” (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1981).

⁶⁵ The taxi industry’s initiatives to redeem themselves in the eyes of the state and the multi-racial public is the subject of Chapter 5.

⁶⁶ For more on the TRC as a post-apartheid nationalist project, see Richard A. Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

spaces to serve diverse commuters – had been difficult to implement because post-apartheid-era bus authorities tended to create rules and policies without the input from taxi interests. “Transitions to more formal operations do not take place without considerable difficulties in implementation,” Schalekamp and Behrens concluded in their review. Moreover, they explained, “the formalization is typically incomplete.”⁶⁷ The disciplinary parameters of their review were such that Schalekamp and Behrens’s findings would not permit them to endorse an incomplete integrated public transport network. While I believe a state of perpetual inadequacy on all fronts is the stuff of dynamic cities, the transport professionals charged with reconciling the tensions between buses and taxis sought clear ends and actionable steps. With great cities bursting at the seams, humanistic social science inquires might be satisfied to conclude that no amount of patchwork will fully prevent future problems, no matter who the providers and stakeholders are. In any case, Schalekamp and Behrens’s concerns brought to the table, then and now, the ideals of a democratic process in which taxis and other informal paratransit modes could best be integrated under a vertical organizational scheme with government oversight. “Until greater consolidation is achieved in, or disaggregated negotiation can take place with the local paratransit industry,” Schalekamp and Behrens explained, “it may be difficult to reach agreement on the regulatory and integration regime that will be put in place.”⁶⁸ Their integration regime, however, refused to think

⁶⁷ Herrie Schalekamp and Roger Behrens, "An International Review of Paratransit Regulation and Integration Experiences: Lessons for Public Transport System Rationalization and Improvement in South African Cities," in *Southern African Transport Conference* (Pretoria, South Africa, 2009), 443.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

through the historical and structural factors of dispossession and displacement that created the disputes in the first place.

South Africa's historical transport inquiries into buses, taxis, and trains lessened in the 1990s, most certainly after the country's democratic transition perhaps, in part, because endemic taxi violence made moot the intellectual debate between those who saw apartheid's transport planning as oppressive, and those who viewed minibuss taxi enterprise as one of the few arenas where black South Africans were able to thrive within the country's racist socio-spatial configuration. Studies like Schalekamp and Behrens signaled a shift to transport scholarship that could generate tangible reforms. Advocating a development economics model which regards entrepreneurship as poverty's solution, for example, Boudreaux recommended South Africa solve three problems facing the taxi industry in the 21st century for the sole purpose of turning it into an economic engine. The three problems Boudreaux cited were violence, safety, and the "legacy of illegality"⁶⁹ that was born in and out of the apartheid era. "In order for policies that address taxi violence to be as effective as possible," Boudreaux explained, "they must focus on official corruption and establish... secure, defensible, and property rights over routes and ranks."⁷⁰ Boudreaux's method was ethnographic and community-based, "which relies substantially on local experience and knowledge," she explained.⁷¹ Boudreaux argued the taxi insider perspective, "helps to ensure that the picture we paint is tied to the world it intends to depict."⁷² The weaknesses of Boudreaux's study were

⁶⁹ My comment above on illegality in the context of the apartheid state, which, by the 1980s, was an international pariah.

⁷⁰ Boudreaux, ii.

⁷¹ Ibid., iii.

⁷² Ibid.

twofold, however. First, Boudreaux assumed that no intellectual work on the taxi industry could be accomplished in the midst of violence. This problem obscures work like Khosa's – studies which could have only been achieved during South Africa's most violent taxi wars because his were driven by a need to interrogate the history of "Routes, Ranks, and Rebels." Moreover, as Chapter 6 will show that queer performance art like Athi-Patra Ruga's "After He Left" transforms experiences with violence to illuminate the perspectives of queer bodies on taxis.⁷³ Second, Boudreaux also assumed that transport studies importantly benefit the state by helping it identify entrepreneurial-minded citizens, like taxi drivers, who, she believes, are exemplars of neoliberal economics and the free market.⁷⁴ While this isn't a problem *per se*, it disables opportunities to view taxis as sites of restorative justice, and history-making itself as a means of undoing transport's entanglement with displacement and dispossession. When one views marginalized transport geographies through the lens of economic development, I contend, one is unable to illuminate the complex black subjectivities that emerge, thrive, and exceed archives of violence that we are given, like that of the transatlantic slave ship or the "pirate" taxi.⁷⁵

Despite my critique, I do not want to be unfair to the disciplinary and historical contexts in which Boudreaux, and Schalekamp and Behrens were writing. Optimists who saw a lot of good in the taxi industry, despite the violence it engendered, believed problems in the industry was more about transport mismanagement than historical trauma and state destabilization, and their social scientific methods sought to better taxis as a

⁷³ This is my reading of Ruga's work, which I explore later in the thesis. Athi-Patra Ruga, *After He Left*, 2009. Solo exhibition. YOUNGBLACKMAN gallery.

⁷⁴ See Tomas Marttila, *The Culture of Enterprise in Neoliberalism: Specters of Entrepreneurship* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013).

⁷⁵ Here I am invoking, of course, McKittrick.

transportation system. Standing on the side of the debate that opposed deregulating the taxi industry (a debate that began in the 1980s and continues until this day), Sekhonyane and Dugard argued that the government must make strong policy changes to reverse the history of violence, apartheid, and competition that brought on its initial growth. Looking into the industry's history, Sekhonyane and Dugard argued that, at every stage of its development, taxi operators, owners, and drivers struggled tooth and nail for control over the taxi industry, a business which Sekhonyane and Dugard described as a “multi-billion rand industry that carries over 60% of South Africa's commuters.”⁷⁶ While Sekhonyane and Dugard's 2004 article was based on history – they gave an overview of the origins of the taxi industry, the consequences of deregulation, and the subsequent taxi wars, which framed taxis' contribution (or lack thereof) to the government negotiation process – their aims were to inform transport professionals like Schalekamp and Behrens, and economists like Boudreaux. Still, their initial insights inform my own study. For example, Sekhonyane and Dugard importantly showed that by the time the government attempted to put the Goldstone Commission recommendations (Chapter 5) into effect in order to stop the taxi wars, the most powerful and warlike members of the taxi industry were poised to put a wrench in any of the government's plans. “It was apparent,” Sekhonyane and Dugard explained, that by 1998, “powerful interests had become vested in mafia-like use of violence as a means of suppressing competition.”⁷⁷ They suggested that the more democratic means that SABTA pushed to align government interests with theirs had given way to powerful fringe taxi groups. “A handful of key supra-associations (called

⁷⁶ Sekhonyane and Dugard, 13.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 16.

‘mother bodies’, to which local associations were affiliated),” they explained, “actively opposed the government’s attempts at re-regulation, sparking an escalation in taxi related violence between 1998 and 1999.”⁷⁸ It was clear at this point to Sekhonyane and Dugard that plans to recapitalize taxis – i.e. fundamentally change the industry’s business model from the top down – could not win out. The story my thesis illuminates, however, reflects the diverging perspectives of elite taxi associations at a time when it was not exactly clear what the future held. Rather than simply accept Sekhonyane and Dugard’s conclusion that some interests won out over other, my thesis digs deeper into the research the transitional government (1992-1993) undertook to end the taxi wars in order to illuminate their strategies to engender peace before countrywide restorative justice topped the national agenda.

Since transport scholars on both side of the transport as oppression or resistance debate could not foresee 1994’s “miracle” election, they never openly hypothesized when or how the taxi wars would end. But by the time the Goldstone Commission of Inquiry for Public Violence and Intimidation starting interrogating the roots and characters of several complex taxi wars around the country, the effects of apartheid dispossession and displacement had embedded itself so deeply into the fabric of everyday South African life made it impossible to discursively dissociate minibus taxi proliferation from armed violence. In fact, the last decade saw few historical inquiries into transport. Instead, research has gone in the positivist⁷⁹ direction of Schalekamp and Behrens’ scholarship.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ I do not use the term “positivist” pejoratively. I use the word to characterize theirs as a sort of pragmatic social science that provides the basis for policy reform, making public life better (or more positive) for citizens in countries that fund such research.

Studies such as Karol Boudreaux's research on taxi driving and entrepreneurship was distinct from Khosa and Pirie's because Boudreaux, in hindsight (looking back at the 1980s and 1990s from a contemporary perspective from the 2000s), could be hopeful that the country's peaceful political transformations might roll over into other realms of administration, like that of transport. That the taxi wars continued well into the 1990s, albeit to a much lesser extent in ANC-led South Africa, they would remain a symbol and a reminder of the profound social challenges (of so-called "black-on-black" violence, in particular) the country witnessed leading up to the concluding political negotiations.

The long-distance commutes made necessary by the processes of dispossession and displacement – and the histories that foreground them – should be as important today in the 21st century as they were when Pirie and Khosa debated whether apartheid's transport network enabled or stifled anti-apartheid political mobilization. It was only through the social history of South Africa and the exploration of the politics of transport that Khosa and scholars such as J. J. McCarthy and Mark Swilling could explain how taxi drivers became successful entrepreneurs in the first place.⁸⁰ By providing an alternative to state-run transport (i.e. by repossessing township streets, and replacing buses and trains), taxis had adequate agency in townships to aid activists and allies sympathetic to protests such as the bus boycotts in Alexandra and the uprising in Soweto – literally carrying them between and across urban space.⁸¹ Because taxis were able to readily facilitate the transfer of resources and ideas at important moments in the history of anti-apartheid resistance, the black taxi revolution that Barolsky had promoted now made

⁸⁰ McCarthy and Swilling.

⁸¹ Khosa, "Routes, Ranks and Rebels: Feuding in the Taxi Revolution."; McCarthy and Swilling, "South Africa's Emerging Politics of Bus Transportation."

clear the ways in which minibus taxis were poised to capitalize (socially and economically) on the popular uprisings against buses and trains. Moreover, precisely because a significant number of minibus taxis were unlicensed and unregistered in the 1970s, they could be as subversive to apartheid law as they could be to the different anti-apartheid resistance movements. Not all black South Africans were aligned with a coherent anti-apartheid movement during the nations' fraught history. Race, class, gender, and generation have always fragmented *umzabalazo* ("the struggle against apartheid").⁸² As a result, some taxis were exposed as *izimpimpi* ("spies"), transporting some workers to work in the midst of protests – violating actions like Stay-Aways, which some activists put in place to coerce their communities into joining their hegemonic campaign against apartheid.⁸³ Although many taxis paid the price of such mutiny, it was their unique ability to build capital in the midst and across the lines of the political tensions of the 1960s and 1970s that enabled them to carve out a space in South Africa's tenuous cultural and political economy. Through interrogating the history of South Africa's public transport system alongside Cape Town's scenes of human dispossession and displacement, my dissertation recovers the work of transport scholars such as Pirie and Khosa on both sides of the "oppression v. resistance" debate – a literature which has been largely forgotten because of ongoing associations between minibus taxis and violence, whether deliberate (such as during the taxi wars) or accidental. Precisely

⁸² Teresa A Barnes, *"We Women Worked So Hard": Gender, Urbanization, and Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe, 1930-1956* (Portsmouth, N.H: Heinemann, 1999); Belinda Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004); Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2000).

⁸³ Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid*.

because minibus taxis continue to ply South Africa's streets, and licensed drivers regard driving passengers for pay as feasible employment, their stories and the work of historians who research and recount them must also evolve over time.

In addition to anti-apartheid resistance, however, several additional themes emerged from minibus taxi literature over the last 50 years: bus subsidies and the extent to which white businesses and the government transport worked together; bus boycotts and the extent to which the state had power over black peoples' access to reliable public transport; taxi wars and the extent to which the proliferation of minibus taxis beginning in 1977/78 would characterize the minibus taxi industry's growth as a failure or a success; and 21st century integrated public transport reform and the extent to which minibus taxis contributes to the public good in a democratic South Africa after the end of the apartheid regime. While each theme represents an important segment on the rise of taxis – as they were being introduced to the public and for decades afterwards – the extent to which the minibus taxis industry contributed to the resistance to apartheid, on the one hand and the continuation of structural racism in South Africa on the other, will remain a persistent theme throughout this dissertation. Simply put, this proposition is based on the question whether or not public transport can adequately better the lives of dispossessed and displaced people. As this section showed, transport has the potential to remove people from places as much as it moves people from place to place. The next section draws closer attention to how the minibus taxi revolution of the 70s and 80s has ambiguous historical value for contemporary South African historiography and the country's historical memory after 1994.

Rethinking the Apartheid Resistance Theme

By showing how the literature on minibus taxis overlaps with questions about the successes and failures of South Africa's attempts to overturn apartheid dispossession and displacement in the everyday lives of the country's most marginalized populations, my study contributes to understanding taxis as a parallel product of emerging global neoliberalism and black capitalism. These global insights into South Africa's taxi industry and public transport for displaced and dispossessed people are unique because the country's public transport history is typically concluded with the taxi wars, on one hand, and the story of the country's "Miracle Election" on the other,⁸⁴ challenging the scholar to broaden the industry's wider implications in the pursuit of collective memory. The critical linkages between the modalities of anti-apartheid resistance, South Africa's mass transport networks, and taxis' place within this environment remained as important areas of enquiry for the engineers of apartheid in the 1970s and 1980s as it was for taxi scholars in the 1990s.⁸⁵

As Africa's nationalist leaders elsewhere sought to re-propose Western conceptions of the nation and modernity through indigenous ways of knowing, scholars such as Khosa and McCarthy sought to cement the marriage between anti-apartheid nationalism and the taxi revolution by giving taxis a usable past.⁸⁶ Interrogating taxis'

⁸⁴ For more on South African exceptionalism, see the Introduction to Mahmood Mamdani, "Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism," (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁸⁵ Meshack M Khosa, "Changing Patterns of 'Black' Bus Subsidies in the Apartheid City, 1944–1986," *GeoJournal* 22, no. 3 (1990).

⁸⁶ The 'usable past' literature is rich. See the following for one example: Bogumil Jewsiewicki, "African Historical Studies Academic Knowledge as 'Usable Past' and Radical Scholarship," *African Studies Review* 32, no. 3 (1989).

social history, Khosa and McCarthy argued that the reasons behind taxis' unprecedented growth were rooted in the popular protests against the apartheid regime's bus and train monopolies in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s.⁸⁷ Thus, they explained that taxis had always been political products precisely because of how they engaged with the history of urban planning in South Africa's cities. Because the linkages between apartheid and urban planning became so stark throughout the middle of the 20th century and the vehicles of mass public transport became so imbued with meanings of racial oppression, the student activists of the Soweto Uprising in 1976 destroyed buses and trains to protest Afrikaans as the primary language of instruction in South Africa's schools.⁸⁸ They also policed sites such as bus stops and train stations, preventing the majority of South Africa's commuting workforce from traveling to work, in order to further stress the racist political economy so dependent on the flow of black labor.⁸⁹

But rather than explore the ways in which transport legislation was part and parcel of different contestations within and between apartheid and its opponents, some scholars such as Colleen McCaul, for example, saw transportation reform apart from both the underlying logics of the apartheid regime and the political tensions mounting on the ground. McCaul argued that the 1977 Van Breda Commission was constituted primarily to understand how to better institutionalize the procedures of licensure for passenger

⁸⁷ Meshack M Khosa, "Routes, Ranks and Rebels: Feuding in the Taxi Revolution," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 1 (1992); Jeffrey J McCarthy and Mark Swilling, "South Africa's Emerging Politics of Bus Transportation," *Political Geography Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (1985).

⁸⁸ Archie Mafeje, "Soweto and Its Aftermath," *Review of African Political Economy* 5, no. 11 (1978); See the photographic archive in Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, *"I Saw a Nightmare..." Doing Violence to Memory: The Soweto Uprising, June 16, 1976* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

⁸⁹ McCarthy and Swilling, "South Africa's Emerging Politics of Bus Transportation."

transport vehicles such as taxis, rather than as an overall opportunity to review future mass transport post-Soweto Uprising.⁹⁰ Indeed, the Road Transportation Act that resulted from the Van Breda Commission allowed vans, minibuses, and pick-up trucks (“*bakkies*”) to carry eight passengers and operate legally as taxis. But McCaul failed to articulate explicitly that with the legalization of these sorts of taxis, the state was basically responding to changes that had already begun to take place in the country – i.e. people turning their spacious vehicles into small-businesses.⁹¹ The purpose of the 1977 Act, therefore, was more than creating new vehicles to re-purpose into taxis. Some taxi entrepreneurs had been doing this for decades. Considering the Goldstone Commission’s wish for an overall review of all taxi activities in bring an end to the taxi wars, redefining existing bureaucratic mechanisms for tracking taxis actually created new modes of surveillance for the state.⁹² In other words, by setting up new licensure procedures for taxis, the transportation act brought many of those rogue taxi drivers taking part in resistance movements under the surveillance of the apartheid regime.

With respect to McCaul, Khosa’s scholarship has better drawn critical connections between transport reform and the anti-apartheid movement taking shape in the 1970s. But rather than recognizing the ways the epistemologies of apartheid exceeded the temporal scope of the transportation act, Khosa regarded legislation as a moment of newfound opportunity for would-be taxi drivers. Khosa argued that prior to the 1977 Act,

⁹⁰ McCaul, *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry*.

⁹¹ Meshack M Khosa, "Capital Accumulation, the Apartheid State and the Rise of the Black Taxi Industry in Johannesburg and Soweto, 1930-1990" (University of Oxford, 1992).

⁹² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd Vintage Books ed., Discipline & Punish (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

taxi owners operated their businesses in what he called an historical moment when “racial discrimination, lack of access to capital, and a minefield of restrictive inappropriate legislation were obstacles to the growth of small black enterprises.”⁹³ Combined with what Khosa regarded as the relaxation of these restrictions after the Soweto Uprising and the economic momentum some taxi owners gained in the political environment of the 1960s and 1970s, the 1977 Road Transportation Act crucially incentivized existing taxi operators’ desire to grow their businesses and created the possibility for newcomers to enter a burgeoning taxi industry.

My study unequivocally demonstrates that there is no question the growth of South Africa’s minibus taxis was inextricably linked to apartheid policies of displacement. In Cape Town today, working-class Khayelitsha-township residents still routinely travel 30-plus kilometers to their service sector jobs in the City Bowl. However, they do this simply to make a living in a historical moment where forced segregation is illegal, but where the long shadow of apartheid social and urban engineering persists to this day. While the growth of taxis and minibuses built on and even hastened resistance against apartheid, its history is obscured if taxis are defined exclusively as acts of opposition to apartheid. Focus on taxis solely as vehicles for anti-apartheid and other forms of anti-oppression protest may obscure more than it reveals. In this regard, my study departs from the dominant narrative.

In addition to rethinking the resistance narrative of South Africa’s taxis, my dissertation also contributes to the literature on public and shared transportation for fares as an informal economy throughout the continent. In 2000, Robert Cervero surveyed

⁹³ Khosa, "Changing State Policy and the Black Taxi Industry in Soweto," 183-84.

informal transport throughout the developing world, and devoted an entire section of the United Nations report to Africa. Rather than survey Africa's multitudinous informal transport modes, Cervero concentrated on Nigeria's motorcycle taxi services called *okada*. *Okada* resemble more the highly variable and adaptable taxis Cervero studied in Southeast Asia. These services offered a window into informal transport or *kabu-kabu* culture. "Some [*kabu-kabu*] are converted open-bed trailer trucks," Cervero explained, "[while] others are beat-up sedans on their last leg, combi-vans and minibuses of several decades vintage."⁹⁴ The weakness of Cervero's analysis of Nigeria's *okada* and *matatus* (Kenya) was his insistence that African poverty drove *a priori* the need and character of informal transport in the continent. "More so than anywhere," Cervero explains, "poor, and in many cases non-existent, public bus services have created a huge vacuum for private entrepreneurs to fill."⁹⁵ The only exception he found was in South Africa, where racism and violent contests over taxi routes created problems in a relatively thriving informal economy. What Cervero failed to consider, however, were the ways the colonial project throughout the continent dispossessed African entrepreneurs and displaced African communities in order to extract labor, capital, and natural resources to fuel Europe's Industrial Revolutions and promote imperial contests.⁹⁶ Rather than make more facile connections between African poverty and the proliferation of paratransit in the developing world, my study illuminates dispossession and displacement to reveal the

⁹⁴ Cervero, *Informal Transport in the Developing World*, 150.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁹⁶ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1972).

nuances of colonialism made manifest in the political economies and geographies of paratransit.

Recognizing how negative portrayals of Africa and African paratransit significantly influence the study of informal transport, my dissertation complements William College historian Kenda Mutongi's work on popular transportation in Nairobi. In an article preceding the 2017 monograph *Matatu: A History of Popular Transportation in Nairobi*,⁹⁷ Mutongi complicated popular perceptions of *matatu* drivers as thugs, arguing that *matatu*'s aggressive, thug-like business tactics were developed out of interpersonal relations between drivers and commuters. "More often than not," Mutongi explained, "the commuters have encouraged and participated in the transgressions of the crews."⁹⁸ In so doing, Mutongi called into question the stereotype of "*matatu* men" as a hereditary one. Instead, *matatu* men were co-created by vertical and horizontal social and economic relationships between drivers, commuters, and owners of varying social locations. Mutongi's study pushed beyond Khosa and Pirie's oppositional bottom-up and top-down narratives of transport reform in South Africa. Despite the contingencies that created *matatu* men as historical subjects, Mutongi explained that popular culture established the *matatu* stereotype, and that stereotypes change over time. This was also why Mutongi believed *matatus* shed light on the complex historical and social processes in post-

⁹⁷ While the majority of Mutongi's book traces the businesses "*matatu* men" created after the end of colonial rule in Kenya, readers may find the book's first chapter ("The Only Way to Get There Was on Foot") useful for understanding how dispossession and displacement created the conditions for Nairobi's current public transport network. Kenda Mutongi, *Matatu: A History of Popular Transportation in Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁹⁸ "Thugs or Entrepreneurs? Perceptions of Matatu Operators in Nairobi, 1970 to the Present," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 76, no. 4 (2006): 549.

Independence Kenya, the context that give *matatus* their very particular character. Rather than fix her study as one narrowly focused on the Nairobi experience, Mutongi boldly extrapolated her research findings so as to focus on important historical narratives in Africa's history, including "organized crime, indigenous entrepreneurship and informal economies, transition to democracy and to free market economies, class and respectability, popular culture, globalization, and rural-urban migration."⁹⁹ Similarly, my dissertation uses South Africa's taxis to place displacement and dispossession at the center of transport histories in Africa, as well as in non-African contexts with deep histories in settler colonialism.

The weakness of Mutongi's (2007) article was the failure to inquire about the possibility for repossession and replacement in Africa. Mutongi's research turns us toward the ways various post-colonial African settings make paratransit such as *matatus* scapegoats for larger, endemic problems. "The culture of blaming needs to be examined," Mutongi explains, "for it might help us deepen our knowledge of post-colonial cultures in Africa and elsewhere."¹⁰⁰ My dissertation expands on Mutongi's analysis how contemporary politics constrains the possibilities of transport reform, to better understand why South Africa's transitional government, both on the right and the left, blamed minibuses for obstructing the democratic outcomes that various government offices and commissions had hoped to bring about after apartheid's end.

These transport histories of blame are deeply intertwined with neoliberal economics, in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent. Anthropologist Todd Sanders

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 566.

argued that when neoliberal economic policies displaced African socialist ones in 1980s Tanzania, for example, rumors spread through the citizenry that the most successful informal transport (or *daladala*) owners made deals with the devil to build thriving businesses. Contributing to anthropological theories of neoliberalism and the occult in the Global South, Sanders showed how ordinary people viewed *daladalas* as modes of informal transport possessed with devilish spirits.¹⁰¹ This is particularly true in the Tanzanian context, where neoliberal developmentalist schemes displaced *ujamaa* African socialism in every aspect of political life, even in public works such as transport. “Thus, Tanzanians recent musings about diabolic forces in the transport sector,” Sanders observed, “could be seen as providing an oblique metaphysical critique of capitalist relations of production, consumption and wage labor, and the inherent exploitation and immoralities therein.”¹⁰² Sanders’s objective with this article was to add more empirical historical evidence supporting recent anthropological trends that understood indigenous fetishization of the occult to better explain the neoliberal present. A weakness of Sanders’s article was that it did not provide an actual transport history of *daladalas*. Still, Sanders pinpointed neoliberalism as an important feature in taxi’s development in the 1980s, when structural adjustment programs boomed throughout the continent.

In a 2002 article, Matteo Rizzo, now of the University of London’s SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), argued against neoliberal economic programs

¹⁰¹ In so doing, Sanders also reminds us of the way “possession” invokes the spiritual world in Africa just as much as it highlights property in many world contexts.

¹⁰² Todd Sanders, “Buses in Bongoland: Seductive Analytics and the Occult,” *Anthropological Theory* 8, no. 2 (2008): 108.

such as deregulating *daladalas* in Dar es Salaam.¹⁰³ Rizzo found that loosening restrictions on who was able to enter the market increased labor exploitation and made for reviled safety procedures in the move to drive up competition.¹⁰⁴ Rizzo took the side of scholars such as Schalekamp and Behrens who believed the state should re-regulate informal transport systems by incorporating them into more standardized functions, without undermining their more door-to-door (i.e. variable) behaviors. However, Rizzo's focus was on labor organization – that is, how fares supplement wages, and the amount drivers give owners at the end of the workday. How fares may satisfy customers, for example, was not explored. But if the money from fares goes to the taxi owner, then the driver would not make adequate take-home pay. Coupled with an increasing supply of taxis under a deregulated market, drivers must work faster and harder if they want to compete and take any reasonable wages home. Driving harder and faster has more pitfalls than benefits for drivers and their passengers. Thus, to make roads safer, Rizzo suggested the state regulate the market, by researching and standardizing fares, wages, and safety, all of which should benefit drivers and commuters mutually.¹⁰⁵ The weakness of Rizzo's study was its focus on drivers and the state, with limited attention paid to owners. In other

¹⁰³ More recently, Rizzo published a monograph on the same subject, which I do not review in this version of the thesis Introduction. Matteo Rizzo, *Taken for a Ride: Grounding Neoliberalism, Precarious Labour, and Public Transport in an African Metropolis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹⁰⁴ "Being Taken for a Ride: Privatisation of the Dar es Salaam Transport System 1983-1998," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 40, no. 1 (2002).

¹⁰⁵ Reflecting on the state of labor in Africa in the global marketplace, Kevin Shillington observes, "it can be argued that African countries are poor because the market system of globalization does not pay African producers enough for their hard-won resources," which means the Tanzania government will not be able regulate the national market sufficiently enough to reduce labor exploitation when the current global world order continues to impoverish countries across the continent. Shillington, 451.

words, Rizzo tells us more about who is being exploited, but little about who is doing it to the drivers. Some sense of what the owning class was doing to either remedy or maintain exploitative working conditions might help the state curb the dangers of hard driving/working workers and their customers. While privatization obscured labor relations, the state also had an incentive to allow owners to dictate terms as usual. For any overextended national government in Africa, the 1980s were made even worse with neoliberal structural adjustment.

By situating my study within the literature on paratransit in Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania, and showing how it is inadequate to understand South Africa's taxis solely as a vehicle for protest, my study contributes to the global literature on automobility. Researcher Kingsley Dennis and sociologist John Urry, for example, use "complexity" theory to understand automobility as a system designed to amass more components and engage new networks, where one is never able to focus on historical contingencies with which the system engages.¹⁰⁶ By gathering more parts of the transport equation (for example, the proliferation of buses creates complex networks of electronic fare cards, paper transfers, electronic schedules, paper schedules, information technology systems to track buses, recycling bins to collect paper transfers and schedules), transport planning becomes inherently forward-looking, and concerned more with what new systems need to be built, rather than accounting for old systems that tend to fade away. Moreover, Dennis and Urry describe automobility as a system in which everyone is coerced into an intense flexibility. It forces people to juggle tiny fragments of time so as to deal with the temporal and spatial constraints that it generates itself. Automobility develops

¹⁰⁶ Dennis and Urry.

instantaneous time to be managed in highly complex, heterogeneous, and uncertain ways, in an individualistic timetabling of fragments of time. We might thus see the car system as a Janus-faced creature, extending individuals into realms of freedom and flexibility, but also constraining them, to live spatially-stretched and time-compressed lives.¹⁰⁷ However, by developing technologies or administrative systems to anticipate and solve future challenges associated with transport complexity, one loses focus on how colonial histories of dispossession and displacement engendered the very same problems new transport technologies resolve to fix.

Envisioning the organizational networks that South Africa's shared minibus taxi build with other providers, consumers, and other shareholders as horizontal and vertical has helped to challenge linear narratives of automobility that overlook dispossession/displacement and repossession/replacement in Africa. American University's Lindsey Green-Simms, for example, has been cautious to characterize the turn of the century automobile revolution as one more ambiguous than triumphant. Green-Simms explains, "it is not always easy to either fully embrace or denounce the pleasures that automobility has to offer" to expose the automobile dichotomy of something that either brings good or evil as a false one.¹⁰⁸ The automobile dichotomy is the idea that automobiles give humans one of two sensations: freedom or slavery. Private cars, however, make the dispossession/displacement aspect far more invisible than public transportation. "Throughout *Postcolonial Automobility*," Green-Simms explains, "I analyze the car as *the sign* through which to read the overdetermined flows of global

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 239.

¹⁰⁸ Lindsey B. Green-Simms, *Postcolonial Automobility: Car Culture in West Africa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 29.

capital and as an object through which to assess the dangers, vulnerabilities, and pleasures global commodity culture produces for African subjects.”¹⁰⁹ Green-Simms narrows the scope even further to West African subjects, arguing that automobiles there symbolize “identity, longing, and status,” as they do elsewhere.¹¹⁰ But in a place such as Lagos, automobiles’ affective universe seems “particularly pressing and unrelenting,” in Green-Simms’ frame of reference.¹¹¹ Thus, “particularly pressing and unrelenting” references West Africa’s place in the global world order,¹¹² and so Green-Simms surveys numerous literary texts to situate this region in the global circulation and development of car cultures. These stories throughout literature reveal, “some of the messy ways that African subjects navigate their role as global consumers in a rapidly and still unevenly globalizing world,” Green-Simms explains.¹¹³

But who are African subjects in our “unevenly globalizing world?” Are these subjects limited to a place on the African continent? As a descendent of African slaves in the New World, are my experiences of car culture part of Green-Simms’ framework? Like the subjects in Green-Simms’ study, I, too, am haunted by the ongoing elusiveness of freedom.¹¹⁴ And the expectation that I become a car owner to be fully human makes

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹¹³ Green-Simms, 16.

¹¹⁴ I borrow the term “elusiveness” from the Introduction to Alexander. I use it to locate myself as part of a racial caste system in the United States that disenfranchises black men at disproportionate numbers from the right to vote. The story I tell of owning a car in the main text expands the consequences of Alexander’s racial caste system to include middle-class black Americans’ encounters with law enforcement.

me anxious. Thus, my methods are deeply entwined with my positionality as a queer black American researcher.

Research Sites and Methods: Archives, Ethnography, and Interviews

I could have chosen any city or small town in South Africa to tell the story how the country's decades-long social engineering project of apartheid dispossessed and displaced its majority black population throughout the country into perpetual public transport commuters and pedestrians living far from city centers even until this day, but my choice to focus on the country's two biggest cities deeply informed my archival, ethnographic, and oral history research methods, as well as the different time-frames of my research interests. As I explained in the Prologue and Introduction, my main site for research was Cape Town, which I compare and contrast with Johannesburg in the dissertation's Chapter Four. I selected Cape Town because my undergraduate research disclosed that the city was home to some of the country's earliest townships,¹¹⁵ and, possibly, I hoped at the time, the earliest taxi businesses that helped transport dispossessed and displaced black people from their homes to the well-resourced city centers for work.¹¹⁶ Cape Town was also home to the Western Cape Archives and Records Service (WCARS), one of the country's two National Archives and Records Service (NARS), where I was able to find materials documenting the earliest motor taxis in the entire country. Combined with the less-restrictive and publicly available resources

¹¹⁵ Townships were peri-urban, commutable residences created near cities to house black workers and sometimes their families who apartheid removed after designated the city areas in which they previously lived as whites-only areas. See "A Glossary of Apartheid Terminology" in Platzky and Walker, xii.

¹¹⁶ I tell the story of the country's first motor taxi business in Chapter 2.

I found at the National Library, which I will discuss next, I specifically found taxi license applications and city council proceedings documenting the establishment of taxi stands. Lastly, Cape Town became my primary site for research also because of the people I knew there whom I had met between 2004-2014. I was also deeply familiar with and always curious about its geography, something that also had sentimental value for me as a person who had never lived outside the United States for more than four months before my very first visit to South Africa in 2004. Cape Town was not only the first city abroad I had visited, but it was also the one city in South Africa where I had formed the closest relationships with history faculty and interdisciplinary postgraduate (i.e. doctoral) and postdoctoral researchers as an Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Global Change Mellon-MacArthur fellow.

Researching Cape Town's history of black dispossession and displacement in the making of South Africa's public transport system, which shuttled black dispossessed and displaced people from impoverished ghettos to wealth city centers, at (and in between!) different sites and institutions allowed me to look at the shared minibuss taxi's national history from quantitative and qualitative vantage points. The paucity of quantitative data documenting the actual number of people displaced – combined with a dearth of qualitative research in exploring transport's effects on the social and cultural lives of people (particularly black and brown South Africans) – actually presented an opportunity to analyze the relationship between dispossession, displacement, and transport provisioning and use. This analysis would employ new and combined interdisciplinary methods. For example, conducting early morning archival research in WCARS downtown left me time to workshop and continuously refine my ideas in community with

scholars at the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape later in the suburbs. When reporting on what I found in the archives, colleagues in African cultural studies there urged me to pose questions about why only certain material appeared in the collections I accessed, and helped me be more cognizant of the colonial politics embedded in archives.¹¹⁷ In addition to questioning the material I accessed, colleagues reminded me that WCARS might assist me more with minibuses than later minibuses history. Moreover, the interwar period figured much less prominently in the archives than I thought, so I left my research site without having filled in two very important decades in the early development of the taxi, which had undoubtedly benefitted from the accelerated efforts to industrialize during World War II. I now believe few interwar documents existed because the Local Road Transportation Boards (LRTBs) that the 1930 Motor Carrier Transportation Act had created was charged with absorbing all the responsibilities for reviewing and issuing taxi licenses. No longer would transport be centralized in the nation's administrative capital – a city with deep roots in British and commercial Dutch bureaucracies. It now makes sense to locate the various LRTB archives around South Africa as I expand this dissertation into a book manuscript and gather more data about the challenges taxi drivers faced in applying and reapplying for licenses during wartime. I was not able to do this over my 15-month dissertation research trip in South Africa for two reasons. First, I wanted to read, write, collect materials, and workshop my findings in dialog with the interdisciplinary research community where I made my home. Second, my research suggested I could fill part of

¹¹⁷ For more on the politics of archives, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1995).

the temporal gap and extend the story much further into the 1970s and 1980s if I broadened my findings in conversation with transport professionals in Johannesburg.

International Historical Statistics has traditionally shed much more light on railway than road transport, which poses unique challenges and opportunities when juxtaposing South Africa's coeval histories of dispossession and road-based economic growth.¹¹⁸

Examining Johannesburg became necessary when the archival sources in Cape Town provided insufficient answers as to repossession and replacement for dispossessed and displaced black South Africans. The archival documents at NARS and WCARS that best illuminated taxi life in Cape Town between 1900-1948 (i.e. the formal beginnings of apartheid), for example, only provided the stories of white taxi entrepreneurs, drivers, and passengers. Because very few archival sources recorded the perspectives of black South Africans, I worked with librarians at the National Library to locate, collect, and copy

¹¹⁸ "Governments have generally been more intimately involved in the provision of means of transport and communication than in agriculture or industry, at any rate until very recently," Mitchell explains in the introduction to international data on transport and communications in the global South. "As a consequence, there is usually more statistical material available from the past than on most other economic activities." Because railways were results of statewide capital expenditures, they yield more data before WWII connected the world's economies closer to democratic capitalism. However, while railway data can be broadly applied to all sorts of governmental and private sources, road transport data is inextricably linked to road construction. "Practically the only data which are generally available are those on the vehicle park, these being derived from licensing (registration) records," Mitchell explains, "since this kind of taxation has been the main method, along with fuel excises, of getting a contribution from road-users to the financing of building and maintaining roads." What my study does differently from economic histories of rail and road is contextualize key moments of transport growth and decline within the apartheid state's forced removal schemes, and pose the question, to what extent is dispossession and displacement part of the state's road and rail decisions? Brian R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Africa, Asia & Oceania, 1750-1988* (New York: Stockton Press, 1995).

hundreds of newspapers that the black taxi industry published in the 1980s, that I will discuss. In fact, Johannesburg – South Africa’s City of Gold – would have offered an excellent site to begin my project, conduct all of my archival and ethnographic research, and to combine it with interviews to tell the story of one of South Africa’s cities changing over time. But it was through my network of interdisciplinary scholars, archivists, and librarians in Cape Town that I was able to find, in the National Library, a repository of black newspapers that WCARS did not hold for some reason. Rather, their archivists were particularly unhelpful when I searched for notes from the perspectives of taxi drivers themselves, particularly those black South Africans who were building their small-scale businesses in the 1930s.

While the secondary literature indicated that interwar insights into black taxi driver perspectives would have been few and far between,¹¹⁹ and my search at NARS and WCARS confirmed a dearth of black taxi perspectives, I learned that black taxi drivers had been conducting oral histories, using them to write about themselves and their colleagues, and published them in their own newspapers in response to the 1977 Road Transportation Act and the proposed 1986 amendment. I found full bound issues of the black newspapers *Drive On* (1985-1991) and *Taxi* (1980-1982) at the National Library and copied them for my personal archive, with the intention of digitizing them after depositing the dissertation. These accounts illuminated the black taxi revolution in

¹¹⁹ Meshack M Khosa, "Changing State Policy and the Black Taxi Industry in Soweto," in *The Apartheid City and Beyond: Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa*, ed. David M. Smith (London, New York, Johannesburg: Routledge, Witwatersrand University Press, 1992).

Johannesburg, filling the gaps from the perspective of the Cape Town archives.¹²⁰ The political context in which the taxi industry published *Drive On* and *Taxis* was different from the archival documents I found in the Archives. After the 1977 Act, the country witnessed black taxi owners and drivers speaking more or less directly with ministers of transport instead of the LRTBs, which handed out taxi licenses locally, and routinely discriminated against black entrepreneurs, but this happened more frequently in the country's economic center (Johannesburg) than its administrative one (Cape Town). Thus, taxi newspapers provided black South African perspectives in the shared minibus taxi industry in the midst of the black taxi revolution. The failing of the newspapers, however, was that they revealed almost exclusively middle-class and elite perspectives on shared minibus taxis, and from the perspectives of taxi owners. While the newspapers documented hundreds of oral histories with drivers and some photographs of commuters, the perspectives of the most dispossessed and displaced taxi drivers and taxi commuters were too often ignored. Moreover, because the national taxi associations that published *Drive On* and *Taxi* were in the Pretoria-Johannesburg area of South Africa, they say very little about the experiences of black drivers in Cape Town – many of whom would have

¹²⁰ The National Library provided much more access to information (both contemporary and historical) than WCARS did. The Library made the internet accessible with WiFi hotspots and public computers. Librarians asked for fewer credentials. The Library was even open 5 hours longer each week. Most importantly, however, the Library seemed more welcoming to young black South Africans, many of whom were also reading, writing, conducting research, and workshopping research findings. The Library served as an invaluable public space for young black South Africans to do serious reading and thinking (homework assignments, usually) in peace and quiet, or amongst friends over conversation. Word also spread quickly among my interdisciplinary postgraduate and postdoctoral community that the Library offered the best amenities to think in quiet, in community, and even in nature because of its proximity to the botanical gardens the Dutch East India Company created centuries ago.

been designated as Coloured under apartheid. Despite these limitations, the newspapers do much more to disclose the shared minibuss taxi's overarching philosophies and priorities, something my dissertation explores in Chapter Four. Combining taxi newspapers with the nation's archives, therefore, enabled me to fill gaps in the other sources, and identify ways I could use my positionality as a queer black American student researcher to find informants to interview at different sites throughout the country.

Just as the spatial and temporal contexts of 20th century Cape Town and Johannesburg are connected through their shared experience during and after the country's apartheid regime, so is my choice to use interviews and ethnography to fill in the silences of the archival documents and black taxi newspapers I found. For example, it was at the National Library in Cape Town where I learned that the most important taxi drivers and operators were in the Transvaal Province, and I decided to spend more time in Johannesburg and Pretoria to round out my research, even if I would not discuss dispossession and displacement in the Transvaal in depth.¹²¹ Precisely because the taxi industry's strongest voices emerged from the east, I used the papers I found in Cape Town as a means to locate and interview seven transportation professionals, both white and black, with longstanding intellectual and economic investments in the Johannesburg taxi industry. They included the author of the most detailed study of South Africa's taxis

¹²¹ In fact, this story has already been written in part. I hope to connect the Johannesburg story and build out the regional stories LRTB archives illuminate as I develop the thesis into a book. For parts of the story already written, see Meshack M Khosa, "Capital Accumulation, the Apartheid State and the Rise of the Black Taxi Industry in Johannesburg and Soweto, 1930-1990" (University of Oxford, 1992); Charles Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1982).

to date, a former SABTA executive committee president as well as the organization's longstanding marketing and economic advisor, and two transport consultants. However, since I was only able to identify these taxi leaders much later – after spending months combing through taxi newspapers at the Cape Town branch of the National Library of South Africa (NLSA or “the National Library”) the gaps in the archival record had proved daunting – I did not conduct full oral histories with my interviewees.¹²²

My interviews with urban planners, taxi veterans, and transport professionals were formal. Each interviewee treated me as a black American student interested in knowing more about South Africa's taxis. I told everyone I interviewed my experience with transport, specifically growing up black and poor in a big U.S. city. I asked everyone to give me a sense of their personal and professional background broadly, their professional experience with minibuses in particular, and their understanding of the history of minibuses in South Africa. I ended each interview with a question about the educational value of minibus taxi history for South Africa's school-aged youth; for the so-called Born Frees. I framed the final question around the usefulness of taxi history in 21st century South Africa to gauge whether or not minibuses still have value, no matter what form they take or evolve into in upcoming years. I also asked the final question because I saw my interviews as teachable moments; opportunities to empower

¹²² Nor did I wander taxi ranks interviewing casual riders. I tried to avoid what Jamie Monson found distributing questionnaires by a rural train station in Tanzania. “Rather than stimulating talk,” Monson recognized before deciding life histories generated more dialog in her research site, “my questions seemed to make people uncomfortable, confused, and eventually silent.” Jamie Monson, “Maisha: Life History and the History of Livelihood Along the Tazara Railway in Tanzania,” in *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed*, ed. Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings (University of Rochester Press, 2003).

my interviewees to be pedagogues and to reinforce my position as independently eager to know more as a foreign student.

My interviews with transport professionals were each one hour, and each convinced me that archival research would produce more substantive, corollary details to put together a history of dispossession and displacement in history of the shared minibuss taxi industry. Although black South African professionals in 1970s and 1980s were not as numerous as white ones, the men and women I interviewed were both white and black. My black interviewees tended to be much younger because it had only been twenty years since black South Africans were hired into the ranks of government transport – indeed, part of what I explained earlier about the history of transport reform was that it was mostly under the control of a white elite; black transport professionals mostly worked in the informal shared minibuss-taxi industry, and far too many died in the taxi wars I discuss in Chapter 5. Thus, while many of the black transport professionals I interviewed were able to inform the current climate of the shared minibuss taxi industry, my white informants told me that transport and black economic empowerment were their life's work, and they were able to tell me stories about their personal and professional interactions with the many men and women in the immediate aftermath of the shared minibuss taxi industry in the late-1970s and 1980s.

I brought my informants into the conversation about the history of South Africa's minibuss taxis by sharing my own interest in the project, and connecting that interest to my own personal history. "I've always been inspired by the story of taxis, and how it developed, and how it changed the landscape of [South Africa's] cities," I said to one interviewee, Paul Browning, a white transport professional living in the suburbs of

Pretoria. Paul responded, “I suspect that you’ll find many people like me to offer anecdotal evidence or experience,” which was true, seeing that there were few known books written on the topic of shared minibus taxi history.¹²³ I assumed Paul was also referring to the fact that many writing on taxis were most likely white, while most black people involved in the shared minibus-taxi in any way were either riding or driving taxis, and had much less time to devote to publishing books and articles on their work. Author and journalist Sean Christie and the University of Cape Town’s Hedley Twidle use this point about the historiography of Cape Town’s famous Main Road to ask how the famous thoroughfare and the many shared minibus-taxis thereon might have inspired writers (in literature) over the centuries.¹²⁴ Since such questions about positionality in and around the shared minibus-taxi have continued to be asked, especially in my own work, I found it both spontaneous and generative to use personal history to ask about a network of 16-passengers vehicles so vast that no series of interviews could ever fully illuminate all the nuances of the transport history I sought to write. Instead, my first interview questions (Where are you from? How did you become involved in transport and taxis? And how has your career progressed since beginning when you did?) not only illuminated the many points that led my informants to the topic, but also formed a basis of connection between them and me, and allowed me to ask how their experience and professional expertise encouraged them to elicit responses to the questions they were indeed eager to have posed to them.

¹²³ Interview with Paul and Shelly Browning, October 2013.

¹²⁴ Hedley Twidle and Sean Christie, “Taxi on Main,” in *Cape Town: A City Imagined and the Meanings of a Place*, ed. Stephen Watson (London: Penguin Books, 2006).

The very fact that I framed minibus taxis in the context of the past (i.e. history) either delighted or perplexed my informants. “I’m less concerned about the past,” Herrie Schalekamp, an urban planner and transport researcher, told me. “I’m more concerned about the future.”¹²⁵ I already knew this about Schalekamp from his research on transport policy with Roger Behrens, which I discussed in the Historiography portion of the Introduction. While his work offered helpful reviews on the literature detailing the history of the minibus taxi recapitalization project, he only inquired about past impasses between government and the taxi industry so as to prevent future impasses.¹²⁶ The question Schalekamp and Behrens posed was incredibly important, and remains so. In particular, they asked, “How do we facilitate better dialogs between informal and formal transport?” I would maintain, however, that their inquiry is also a question of public history and heritage. How we honor the work taxi veterans did over the last few decades while working with them to help change what they pioneered for the benefit of as many people as possible, thus, became the attitude with which I engaged my informants as knowledgeable professionals in their own right.

Using ethnography to translate both the signs and symbols my interviewees mentioned but did not discuss, and the silences in the archival documents and taxi newspapers I found posed several challenges, but also helped deepen my critique of public transport’s potential to offer social and economic freedoms to dispossessed and

¹²⁵ Elliot James interview with Herrie Schalekamp, October 2013.

¹²⁶ Herrie Schalekamp and Roger Behrens, "Engaging Paratransit on Public Transport Reform Initiatives in South Africa: A Critique of Policy and an Investigation of Appropriate Engagement Approaches," *Research in Transportation Economics*, 29 (2010).

displaced peoples.¹²⁷ First, the “elusive” character of Johannesburg made it difficult to gather a sense of how dispossession and displacement figured as prominently as in Cape Town.¹²⁸ However, since I am interested in both Cape Town and Johannesburg, spending time in both cities enabled me to understand not only how public transport emerged out of both historical contexts of forced removals, but also opened up avenues for exploring the extent to which public transport emerged under similar conditions in other contexts throughout the world. While I did not apply the same critical ethnographic lens to Johannesburg that I did in Cape Town, including the one in my Prologue, for example, I was able to recount the philosophies of black business that the country’s most powerful taxi drivers and associations employed to influence taxis nationwide by looking at their newspapers and interviewing two informants who were instrumental in getting the papers off the ground. Moreover, I understood my ethnographic with the history of public transport in Cape Town as the opportunity to think deeply while riding in cars, taxis, trains, and busses to understand what it felt like to write a local history of transport borne out of dispossession and displacement with my own personal history growing up as a commuter in mind. My ethnographic treatment of Johannesburg was mostly archival, on the other hand. Chapter Four details, for example, how deeply moving Johannesburg’s taxi history of repossession and replacement could be for a formerly dispossessed and displaced black American commuter like myself. Doing so urged me to connect South Africa’s taxi story to global ideas about black uplift, mostly propagated in black media

¹²⁷ For one of the most important essays about the method of ethnography, see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

¹²⁸ Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe, *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008).

like Marcus Garvey and Amy Ashwood's *Negro World*, to the philosophies of black capitalism could have very well inspired literate, educated taxi elites. While doing ethnographic work in Cape Town illuminated important moments of dispossession and displacement, which I also felt as a black American student, ethnographic work in Johannesburg illuminated the moments of repossession and replacement that is currently enjoyed by the city's large, but fairly new, black middle-class. My thesis' main title *Sithutha Isizwe* or "We Carry the Nation" and its subtitle "Dispossession, Displacement, and the Making of the Shared Minibus Taxi," therefore, is emblematic of how simultaneously inspiring and troubling the themes of dispossession/displacement and repossession/replacement in my thesis are. In many ways, my ethnographic work on this thesis was about bringing these common themes of modern black life together in a historical context that is complicated because of settler colonialism and apartheid's divide-and-rule strategies. Like the people who South Africa dispossessed and displaced over the last quarter millennium, so, too, dispersed are the methods and sites I am employing to tell the story of our modern world's most important technology for bringing human beings together: public transport.

At the center of my method for tracing how dispossession and displacement founded the most popular form of public transport in South Africa is the storytelling form to work through the interviews I conducted with transport professionals, the ethnographic observations and archival findings I documented during my time in the field, and the challenge of writing objectively on a subject that so closely resembled my personal experience as a black boy growing up in the poorest county in one of the richest, most unequal cities in the world, and finding himself living and working in a rural area over a

thousand miles from what my parents consider home.¹²⁹ Doing so puts Method at the center of building on the substantive insights from something like Jennifer Hart's recent book *Ghana On The Go*. While Hart's work used hundreds of first-hand interviews with *tro tro* (shared minibus-taxi) drivers to shed light on motor transport and everyday life in Ghana, her personal investment in the research did not resonate with me as much as the work of Black Diaspora scholars like Saidiya Hartman, Katherine McKittrick, and Sylvia Wynter, who frequently shifted between black thinker-practitioners who were not as tied to site as Africanist historians like myself tend to be. It's precisely these itineraries of traveling black thought that expands the scope of shared minibus-taxi projects in Africa to encompass stories of black travel, black dispossession and displacement, and black repossession and replacement that are embodied by this very thesis – a study of taxis that resonates with realizations of black selfhood in an anti-black global world order that constantly pushes Africa to the margins.¹³⁰

Chapter Outline: Internal Architecture of the Thesis

J. C. Le Roux's Motor Carrier Transportation Act of 1930 (the 1930 Act from now on) was the first law to regulate the activities of automobiles transporting passengers or goods on paved or dirt roads for profit, the first piece of legislation to open up the opportunity for a taxi driver of any background to make a living, and, thus, serves as the

¹²⁹ For more on the importance of narrative and storytelling in the making of history, see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1990).

¹³⁰ The study of "Africa" as real and imagined is rich. See, for example, V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

backdrop of the chapters that immediately proceed after this Introduction. “Chapter 2: Historical Antecedents of the Shared Minibus Taxi: The Cape Colony, 1830-1930” illuminates turn of the 20th century Cape Town, when the developed world’s automobile revolution (of which South Africa’s post-1870s mineral revolution was part) coincided with the founding of the Union of South Africa. In 1908, South Africa witnessed the first hard-won attempts to integrate motor-taxis into a transportation network in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). Only in 1930 did the country begin regulating the fares drivers charged to transport around the middle-class in their bought or borrowed motor-cars. I use regional archives and popular newspapers from the early 20th century to show the lengths to which the early motor-car acquisition and repair company Benjamin & Lawton went to convince Cape Town’s city council to create never before dictated street lanes, spaces to stand, and license and driving standards for motor-taxis to operate under the auspices of the law and with the public’s safety in mind. At a time when protections for horse-drawn cabs were strong because people could trust a tamed beast more than they could a soulless steel frame, Chapter 2 argues that Cape Town only began to accept motor-taxis when their advocates could prove how the new transport technology would help an already established, formerly-British “post-colonial”¹³¹ public life flourish. In an historical context in which deaths by railroad, though profitable, caused great public

¹³¹ I use scare-quotes to signal the different ways the “post-colonial” is theorized and problematized in the Global South, particularly in South Africa, which witnessed merely a transition from the dispossession and displacement mechanisms under the Dutch East India Company and the British Empire, to the dispossession and displacement mechanisms that merely took a different form during the apartheid regime (1948-1994). Indeed, scholars today question the extent to which South Africa was ever “post-colonial.” For example, see the Introduction to Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa: Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts*, (HSRC Press, 2009).

concern throughout the country, I highlight one particular 1911 court case in where a Scottish immigrant taxi driver injured a pedestrian and then had his taxi license revoked to illuminate one person's 3-year long court battle to get their license back. With the purpose of illuminating the legal, political, and social components of urban white taxi driving just as the country planned to dispossessed all black landowners of their property in 1913, the case shows how white taxi drivers needed to only prove their respectability (in the form of a healthy, heterosexual family life) to disprove any complicity in negligent driving. The case reveals a world of strict taxi licensing and regulation procedures that yielded significantly to metropolitan Victorian ideals of monogamous, heterosexual, white masculinity. The safety and security of British world gender norms, an in the context of domestic and foreign, British and Boer, cross-cultural white legislation in the form of the Natives Land Act of 1913, the chapter suggests, could assuage both the public's concern about transport deaths and injuries as well as the sexual freedoms motor-taxis in the city afforded.

Chapter 2 is a particularly important pre-history of the shared minibus taxi industry, because South Africa's very first motor taxis appeared in Cape Town in 1908. At the time, however, the Hackney Carriages and Cabs Act of 1893 (HCC) governed their operations. The HCC was written for horse-drawn carriages and cabs, but became applied to motor cabs in 1903, finally coming into effect in 1908.¹³² Since popular opinion held railroads above all other vehicles as transportation's premiere economic driver, and "since there was almost no road transportation to speak of at the beginning of

¹³² Noel Janisch, "Cape Town Municipality. Regulations Re Motor Taxi Cabs. (Framed under Act 26 of 1893).", ed. Colonial Secretary (Cape Town: Colonial Secretary's Office, 1908).

the century and also little competition between road and rail,” horse-drawn carriages and motor cars were of very little consequence, and could thus be conflated under the HCC.¹³³ In the chapter, I argue that the 1930 Act came about through the dispossession and displacement of black laborers, mixed-race descendants of slaves, and the white working-class in Cape Town. As South Africa’s legislative capital, Cape Town founded the first law governing motor-cab taxi drivers on the experiences of white male immigrant drivers in the country’s city with the deepest roots in the colonial project. Formed in the interwar 1920s, which saw South Africa use racist tactics to restructure the gold mining industry to shield its national economy from the lows following the Great Depression,¹³⁴ the Union of South Africa (established in 1910) appointed J. C. Le Roux to help build a taxing structure in order to capitalize on the growing popularity of automobiles transporting goods and people.¹³⁵ The 1930 Act, in effect, created two new administrative bodies: local road transportation boards (LRTBs) to decide who and under what conditions a driver could hold a motor carrier certificate to transport goods or people for a fee or fare; and the National Transport Commission (NTC) in Cape Town to oversee the country’s regional LRTBs. “While the act initially contained no regulations for motor cars carrying more than seven passengers,” minibus taxi researcher Colleen McCaul explained, summarizing her research on the intended effects of the 1930 Act for taxis, “the NTC said in a report in March 1932 that steps had to be taken soon to amend the act so as to bring taxi operators within the ambit of the act.”¹³⁶ However, South Africa

¹³³ McCaul, 36.

¹³⁴ Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, Fourth Edition ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 154.

¹³⁵ Mitchell, 730.

¹³⁶ McCaul, 37.

built few motor taxis to carry more than five passengers, so in 1941, the NTC amended the Act, limiting the number of passengers in taxis to six people (five passengers and one driver). Since the intended effects the 1930 Act were to tax the growing motor transport industry, and supplement the railroad industry's might, rather than supplant it, no one has written on the Act's roots in colonial dispossession and displacement. Meshack Khosa did, however, illuminate the 1930 Act's effects on black taxi businesses. While it was legal for anyone who qualified as a taxi driver to become one, LRTBs furthest from administrative oversight at the Cape Town NTC routinely discriminated against black South Africans, preventing them from acquiring coveted taxi licenses.¹³⁷ While some were able to acquire licenses and fleets of their own, the South African Union in collaboration with LRTBs saw most black South Africans as transport users, and rarely as owners.¹³⁸ In other words, the 1930 Act was never designed to provide opportunities for black South Africans to obtain low skilled taxi driving work. Such was the tenor of black participation in the Union's economy nationwide. "Awakening on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually, a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth," Sol Plaatje famously wrote to describe the Natives Land Act.¹³⁹ But his words might also describe the plight of the black taxi driver after the 1930 Act.

Despite several inconsequential amendments to the 1930 Act, including motor taxis' 1941 formal inclusion, McCaul explained, "the principles underlying the regulation

¹³⁷ Khosa, "Changing State Policy and the Black Taxi Industry in Soweto." Also, interview with Godfrey Ntlatleng, published in McCaul, 37-38.

¹³⁸ Khosa, "Changing Patterns of 'Black' Bus Subsidies in the Apartheid City, 1944–1986."

¹³⁹ Sol T. Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa, Before and Since the European War and the Boer Rebellion* (London: P.S. King & Son, Ltd., 1916)

and control of transportation remained unchanged” throughout the two middle quarters of the 20th century.¹⁴⁰ Building on Chapter 2’s contention that each transport act was complicit and helped further the dispossession and displacement of black South Africans, both before and during the apartheid era, Chapter 3, “Apartheid, Forced Removals, and Public Transportation in Cape Town, 1948-1978,” argues that South Africa’s apartheid regime increasingly used buses to scaffold railroads’ attempts to turn black commuters into moving pawns of the regime’s segregationist, social engineering project. While Le Roux’s 1930 Act inquired into the competition between motor-cars and railways decades prior, the NTC commissioned Alex van Breda in 1977 to inquire into buses’ competitors. By this time both bus and taxi began to see exponential growth in use.¹⁴¹ Bus companies under the protection of South African Transport Services (SATS), however, were worried that taxi drivers, who were predominantly black and servicing ghettos by this time, would take their business.¹⁴² So, the Road Transportation Act of 1977 (the 1977 Act) more clearly defined what vehicles counted as buses in order to restrict the numbers of passengers black “bus” drivers could carry, and legitimize private and SATS-backed buses as the commercial road vehicle with access to the largest numbers of commuters.

¹⁴⁰ McCaul, 36.

¹⁴¹ At the very same time, commercial (buses and taxis) and passenger (private car) vehicle production witnessed its lowest numbers of the decade in 1977. After 1977, however, road vehicle manufacturing and use of all types saw exponential growth that was even greater than it had seen the decade prior. In every case, however, private car use and manufacturing outpaced public transport’s at every point since 1930, even though private car drivers were primarily white and commuters primarily black. Brian R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Africa, Asia & Oceania, 1750-2000* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

¹⁴² Khosa, "Capital Accumulation, the Apartheid State and the Rise of the Black Taxi Industry in Johannesburg and Soweto, 1930-1990." Railways, too, remained complicit in apartheid’s segregationist project. Gordon H Pirie, "Rolling Segregation into Apartheid: South African Railways, 1948-53," *Journal of Contemporary History* 27, no. 4 (1992).

Finding the nascent taxi industry as not much of a threat and ignoring the growing radical resistance movements to buses specifically and black poverty more broadly, the 1977 Act that the Van Breda Commission enacted a law that went to great lengths to define buses. The 1977 Act did not do the same for taxis, however. “[The 1977 Act] defined a ‘bus’ as a motor vehicle designed or adapted for the conveyance of more than nine persons (including the driver),”¹⁴³ McCaul concluded in her analysis of the Act. “Taxis, therefore, could operate legally as eight-passenger vehicles.”¹⁴⁴ And stuff eight passengers into their sedans that fit only six, black taxi drivers did. Moreover, as the Group Areas Act of 1950 moved black neighborhoods further and further from city centers, and as forced removals “reached their most concentrated and colossal form between the early 1960s and mid-1970s,” the demand for more capacious commercial vehicles also grew.¹⁴⁵ What Van Breda’s Commission did not anticipate, however, was the extent to which the political tide would turn in 1976, when young black South Africans abandoned their parents’ well-worn strategy of demonstrating peacefully to protest bus fare hikes and began burning SATS buses to the ground in the momentous Soweto Uprising.¹⁴⁶ The uprising, notably, occurred around the same time Datsun Nissan starting building commercial road minibus vehicles, which could comfortably carry ten passengers and legally carry the eight passengers the 1977 Act allowed before being considered a bus. Indeed, it was this

¹⁴³ McCaul, 36.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Bundy, “Land, Law and Power: Forced Removals in Historical Context,” 8.

¹⁴⁶ See photographic archive in Pohlandt-McCormick.

“loophole” that enabled the growth of the taxi industry – a growth that soon eclipsed the number of commuters on railroads and buses.¹⁴⁷

In 1981, the apartheid state hoped to correct Van Breda’s mistake – a “mistake,” I contend, that was not his, but part of the state’s longstanding strategy to dispossess and displace black South Africans – by appointing Peter Welgemoed, a Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) transport economics professor, to head a Commission of Inquiry into Bus Passenger Transportation. “By 1982,” McCaul observed, “it was estimated that over 90% of black taxis were minibuses carrying up to nine passengers.”¹⁴⁸ So, the commission proposed to amend the 1977 Act by defining taxis as any commercial vehicle carrying more than five passengers, which would define minibus taxis, those very same transport modes that were gaining momentum by the time the Welgemoed Commission convened, as buses. Chapter 4, “Black Capitalism in the Taxi Industry, 1976-1990,” argues that black drivers and owners’ opposition to being forced to abandon their hard- and sneakily-earned vehicles crippled the Welgemoed Commission’s proposal to redefine the minibus taxis they had run for half a decade as buses. Importantly, the decade between 1983-1993 heard the black taxi industry’s loudest voices, and many white leaders in government and industry began listening in ways white South Africans in power had never done before. Moreover, because opposition to the Welgemoed

¹⁴⁷ The minibus taxi industry’s ability to take advantage of a “loophole” in the 1977 Act begins the traditional story of the minibus taxi revolution in South Africa. “The kombitaxi industry emerged in the late 1980s as an integral part of South Africa’s passenger transport industry,” McCaul wrote in her study’s Synopsis. “It was no easy ride. Initially it was only through a loophole in the Road Transportation Act of 1977 that minibuses could operate legally as taxis at all, and then with one seat empty.” My study differs from McCaul’s by fleshing out the pre-1977 timeline, which witnessed some of South Africa’s most violent forced removals. McCaul, vi.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 39.

commission was not unilateral, the taxi industry saw significant infighting and diverging visions of what their newfound political and economic power should look like. The Southern African Black Taxi Association (SABTA) President, Jimmy Sojane, for example, saw the Welgemoed Commission's attempts to more clearly define which types of vehicles could be taxis (and, therefore, which vehicles were ineligible) as an opportunity to root out unlicensed minibus taxi drivers who were competing increasingly with licensed taxi drivers. By this time, however, the numbers of unregistered minibus taxi drivers equaled the number of drivers with legitimate licenses, so, by taking the legalists' side within the industry, Sojane alienated nearly half the industry. "Mr Sojane was criticized as a 'sellout'¹⁴⁹ by illegals," McCaul explained, "who saw his proposals [to more clearly define taxis] as an attempt by the legalists to entrench their position at the expense of the illegal¹⁵⁰ majority."¹⁵¹

Welgemoed's failed 1983 amendment to the 1977 Act signaled an important shift in the history of minibus taxis in South Africa. Up until 1983, black taxi drivers and

¹⁴⁹ In the context of the apartheid government's attempt to undermine, through a covert war of counterinsurgency in the 1980s, all forms of resistance in South Africa by infiltrating resistance movements and growing solidarity movements with informants, the term "sellouts" was a hefty and potentially deadly accusation.

¹⁵⁰ The notion of illegality under apartheid – a regime that had widely and internationally been condemned as outside of or beyond the law – also needs to be read with caution, seeing as the term was deployed (like "sellout") to undermine and destabilize anti-apartheid resistance movements. Citing Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben, Ian Baucom calls this the "lawless operation of the law." See Baucom, 186. p.186

¹⁵¹ McCaul, 44. The story concerning Sojane, however, is largely untold. Instead, it's been much more common to view the infighting within the taxi industry as part of the apartheid regime's strategy of destabilization, and the wider mafia-like control over routes. Importantly, the latter saw very little difference between legal and illegal taxis because either was capable of protecting their routes with violence and intimidation. Khosa, "Routes, Ranks and Rebels: Feuding in the Taxi Revolution."; Sekhonyane and Dugard.

owners had no say in laws regulating passenger transport. After Welgemoed's defeat, however, no transport legislative body would make any decisions about how South African's would be transported or transport themselves without "black voices," and there were few louder than the taxi industry's. In fact, Welgemoed was unable pass his amendment to classify minibus taxis as busses precisely because black taxi owners and drivers became organized under national bodies like SABTA, pushed back against buses and trains' allies, caught the ear of transport administrators at the highest levels of government and industry, and fought to have them take taxi operators' issues and concerns seriously. On the surface, the period between 1983-1993 tells a triumphant story of black South Africans sticking it to the apartheid state and building capital in their resistance to white supremacy in order to grow from a fledgling, inchoate business to providing transport for approximately 625,000 commuters.¹⁵² And while Chapter Four narrates the chorus of voices from the black taxi industry (the literature called it the "black taxi revolution"¹⁵³) with the 1977 Act as backdrop, Chapter 5, "Taxis in the World of Neoliberalism and Post-Apartheid South Africa, 1990-2000," argues that Commissioner R. J. Goldstone's Committee Investigating Public Violence and Intimidation in the Taxi Industry (1992-1993) effectively muffled taxis' newfound autonomy and outspokenness as South Africa prepared for a transition of power from the National Party (the whites-only party elected on its anti-black, segregationist platform in 1948) and the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994. Utilizing the neoliberal tropes of entrepreneurship and the free market, the taxi industry's most vocal authorities used

¹⁵² McCaul, v.

¹⁵³ Barolsky.

the black press to sharpen how they wanted to be remembered under the new government. While the Goldstone Commission conducted seven inquiries into the violent Taxi Wars between rival taxi associations, which were occurring by the hundreds and in the shadow of peaceful negotiations between Mandela and F. W. de Klerk, SABTA used the newspapers it edited to tell the story about how black taxi operators, against the backdrop of forced removals, already overcame apartheid in some sense by beating white, SATS-backed busses with black minibus taxis and by literally and figuratively re-appropriating the streets and ghettos that apartheid created to dispossess and displace black people. While the taxi elite's attempts to recover their story of revolution in the midst of internal infighting and South Africa's political transition, Chapter 6, "Reinterpreting the History of the Taxi: A Gendered Analysis," illuminates early 21st century South Africa to argue that now is the time to rethink the dominant taxi story and the acts that created it over time by centering ways gendered minorities use taxis today to combat the dispossession and displacement they endured at the same time taxi elites effected their own repossession and replacement.

While the previous chapter narrated the chorus of voices from the so-called "black taxi revolution"¹⁵⁴ with the 1977 Act as backdrop, this chapter shows how Commissioner R. J. Goldstone's Committee Investigating Public Violence and Intimidation in the Taxi Industry completely reversed the autonomy taxis witnessed only a decade earlier. As South Africa prepared for a transition of power from the National Party (the whites-only party elected on its anti-black, segregationist platform in 1948) and the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994, the nation's highest echelons – black and white – muffled

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

taxis' newfound autonomy and outspokenness. The chapter shows that not long after "Follow That Taxi!" South Africa witnessed some of the most violent Taxi Wars leading up to the 1994 elections and subsequent political transition. The 1990s, therefore, marked a time when the taxi industry was understandably defensive about its role in that political transition. Chapter 5 argues that South Africa folded the taxi industry into other cadres of undesirable entities who were deemed complicit in deepening racial and ethnic divides, and fueling violent conflicts. Therefore, Barolsky's study would have been dismissed by government and ordinary people, as much as it was accepted in business circles.

Together, the chapters reveal rural and urban jitneys as more than just a means of popular transport for the black South Africans and the underprivileged throughout the Global South. Minibus taxis undoubtedly fulfilled the human need to survive just as the apartheid regime displaced South Africans from the centers of cities over and over again. In the process, however – and this is the story with which my thesis is most concerned – taxis absorbed, observed, and articulated the multitudinous identities of displaced, dispossessed peoples, and transported their stories far and wide; stories that inspired feelings of awe, as well as fear and anxiety. That taxis transformed from a miracle informal economy into agents of death and destruction during the Taxi Wars is often seen as the story of the minibus taxis' end; its social death.¹⁵⁵ And were it driven to answer only substantive questions, my thesis would conclude in Chapter Five. However, the story of "Public Intimidation and Violence" was the story the Goldstone Commission

¹⁵⁵ The following article on the taxi wars is easiest to find worldwide, and continues to be cited as possibly the most important, nuanced look at South Africa's taxi wars. Few studies on South Africa's taxis followed the high-impact article Khosa, "Routes, Ranks and Rebels: Feuding in the Taxi Revolution."

told, and theirs is not mine. Observing that the Goldstone Commission merely footnoted apartheid as a contributing factor to the Taxi Wars and not the entire history of the South Africa's taxi itself, it is my intention to re-center settler colonial dispossession and displacement, and black South African repossession and replacement as the driving forces of major transformations in the industry over the entire 20th century.

The two chapters drawing attention to Johannesburg, where the post 1977/8 black taxi revolution centralized its political activities, have the potential to set up an artificial divide between the experiences in the two cities. Anecdotal evidence shows, however, that there is a deep divide in how South Africans all over the country regard their two megacities (Cape Town and Johannesburg), and I do not want to set up a false dichotomy which posits, while the forces of dispossession and displacement were centralized in Cape Town, repossession and replacement forces were centralized in Johannesburg. For the purpose of this study only, I identify Cape Town from the beginning of the 20th century as the site where I saw the ways displacement and dispossession became central to creating a “docile” commuter class most clearly. Cape Town became the case of dispossession and displacement in my narrative because I conducted more archival work there than I did in Cape Town. However, it is equally true that the establishment of diamond mines around Kimberley and gold mines in Johannesburg, the area known as the Transvaal was made by removing first-come-served rights to mine black people and mixed-race South Africans, and consolidating previously dispersed tracts of land into some of the most powerful monopolies the world had ever seen. Thus, there is an important story of dispossession and displacement in Johannesburg that I do not explore as well as I could have. However, this does not take away from the fact that Cape Town's

public transport system was built by making displaced and dispossessed people travel far from home to work, not does it take away from the fact that Johannesburg saw the post-1977/8 black taxi revolution much more clearly in portions of the country, which did not witness the Coloured Labour Preference Policy.

The forced removals South Africa saw nationwide in the 1960s, in fact, began in Cape Town by the turn of the century, a historical moment which also witnessed the automobile's internal combustion engine and the public consumption of cars all over the world. Bringing histories of forced removals and the automobile taxis together, early 20th-century Cape Town shows how dispossession and displacement, not human progress nor utopia, could found transportation and public transport in a modern world that settler colonialism created. Part Two of the thesis sheds light on Johannesburg's (c.1970-2010) taxi history to show how black minibus taxi operators' drive to repossess the most popular modes of transport for dispossessed and displaced people, and replace the transportation modes that the apartheid state set up alleviate their mobility impairment with minibus taxis in a neoliberal world order founded new ways to dispossess and displace, albeit on the terms of gender and sexuality, and not simply race and class. Philosophies of blackness and black feminism frame the second part precisely because "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," and South Africa's current intellectual and political crises, as I will explain in thesis Chapters Four and Five on Johannesburg, make this abundantly clear.¹⁵⁶ Johannesburg witnessed the biggest

¹⁵⁶ Audre Lorde made the quotation famous, and her descendants' cousins invoke the short essay to question resistance methods that either have no teeth or reproduce oppression. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Feminist Series (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007). Lorde's provocation resonates with postcolonial critiques of University

minibus taxi boom in South Africa. The thesis' epilogue revisits public transport's history in early 20th century Cape Town and minibus taxis' history in late 20th century Johannesburg to examine 21st century plans to reform public transport for all South Africans as transport services become digitized with apps like Uber and Lyft. The 21st century witnessed the first nationwide plans for land expropriation, poverty alleviation, and housing reform, but, because of their history, minibus taxis played a very controversial role in the process. Thus, the thesis' epilogue locates the latest transport revolution in a century-long story of dispossession, displacement, repossession, and replacement. The epilogue argues that close attention to transport's racial and classed, *and* gendered and sexualized properties makes repossession and replacement (i.e. the polar opposites of dispossession and displacement) possible in the socio-technical age of the taxi.¹⁵⁷ Using the black taxi revolution (1976/77/78-1986) and taxi wars' (1986-1993) story in Johannesburg as my second case - Cape Town (c.1900-1970) is the first - I use Queer Theory to trouble the conceptions of possession and place that continue to dispossess and displaced South Africa's most marginal citizens: immigrants, the poor, and gender non-conforming people.¹⁵⁸ Once reimagined, I contend repossession and replacement, together, do hold the potential for dispossessed and displaced people to

reform. See Lalu. As a black American Africanist, and as my mother's son, it's important that I bring Lalu and Lorde into conversation wherever necessary because their end goals, I would argue, are the same: true liberation once and for all.

¹⁵⁷ See the following for more on the 'socio-technical' age of the automobile. Kingsley Dennis and John Urry, *After the Car* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2009).

¹⁵⁸ "Repossession" and "replacement" also signals South Africa's present moment, and the debates that ensued after current President Cyril Ramaphosa brought up land expropriation in a Parliamentary meeting on existing racial inequities. For example, see Nurene Jassiem, "Land Reform - the Key Challenge of Our Time [Opinion]," *Africa News Service* 2018.

reclaim possession and place in non-normative ways in South Africa and everywhere else touched by the digital information age.

CHAPTER TWO: Historical Antecedents of Transport and Apartheid: An Overview

Introduction

On the 29th of October in 1911, a 25-year old Scottish immigrant and taxi driver William Craigen was arrested for running over Gilbert Maltravers in Cape Town, on the eve of the town's busy summer season. Maltravers, a long-time white resident of Cape Town in the brand-new Union of South Africa, was walking along the scenic Victoria Road at the time, investigators found.¹⁵⁹ Cape Town's City Council, which was solely responsible for licensing and vehicle registration decades before the Union decided to regulate commerce and trade on roads, immediately revoked Craigen's license when law enforcement presented the case. In addition to injuring Maltravers, Craigen was also found guilty of giving his unlicensed female associate Lizzie Manielle the wheel that day. Investigators learned Manielle was, in fact, behind the steering wheel when Maltravers was struck down, but Craigen bore all responsibility. It took almost three years for Craigen to prove worthy enough to have his license reinstated.¹⁶⁰ In that time, Craigen solicited endorsements from the Royal Automobile Club of South Africa (RACSA), the South African Motor Mechanics & Driver Association (SAMMDA), and sympathetic

¹⁵⁹ Magistrate, "Rex Versus 1. Lizzie Manielle, Female, Barmaid, Age 22 Yrs, Russia. 2. William Craigen, Male, Age 35, Scotland."; "Motor Mishap Sequel," *Cape Times*, November 7 1911.

¹⁶⁰ "Correspondence Re Cancellation of License-Taxi Cab Driver William Craigen."

police officers, who vouched for Craigen's moral integrity as a husband, father, and family man, which convinced Council of Craigen's road-worthiness.

The details of the accident and the legal process through which Craigen was able to navigate in order to achieve the rarely documented feat of having his license reinstated in interwar and pre-WWII South Africa tells us a lot about the earliest laws governing taxi drivers, most of which were white. The story also shows how the earliest transport stakeholders began shifting liability from the company to individuals, as well as the challenges facing those who wanted to enter the profession in early 20th century Cape Town; a historical moment in which a select number of white men were licensed to drive as long as they conformed to Victorian ideals of masculinity and fatherhood. The case also illuminates ordinary and powerful Capetonians' reception of commercial vehicle transport, in city government, society, new city economies, and the law in relation to previous modes of transport. What the archive of Craigen's struggle to drive after being found guilty of injuring Maltravers obscures, however, were the scores of black South Africans who were not only denied driving education and taxi licenses, but were also being increasingly targeted by the state throughout the country.

Historical Antecedents of Apartheid in Cape Town

Cape Town, today, is a sprawling city, consisting of an economically vibrant central business district to the north in the embrace at the foot of Table Mountain; city neighborhoods wrapped around the mountain; suburbs that stretch inland, away from the mountain and along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean; and, townships that are positioned east of these, far from the mountain, marking the ends of the municipality border. Just as

these places are distributed throughout the Cape Town's metropolitan limits, so, too, are the numerous racially segregated neighborhoods. (Figure 2.1) These residential areas are populated by narrowly defined racial groups that were created to facilitate apartheid. While the displacement of thousands of Africans from the city's core to townships from 1948-1976 determined Cape Town's urban sprawl today, the city saw the artificial organization of city space by race more than a century prior to today's map. This section, thus, gives a broad overview of Cape Town's changing demographics before the formal start of apartheid.

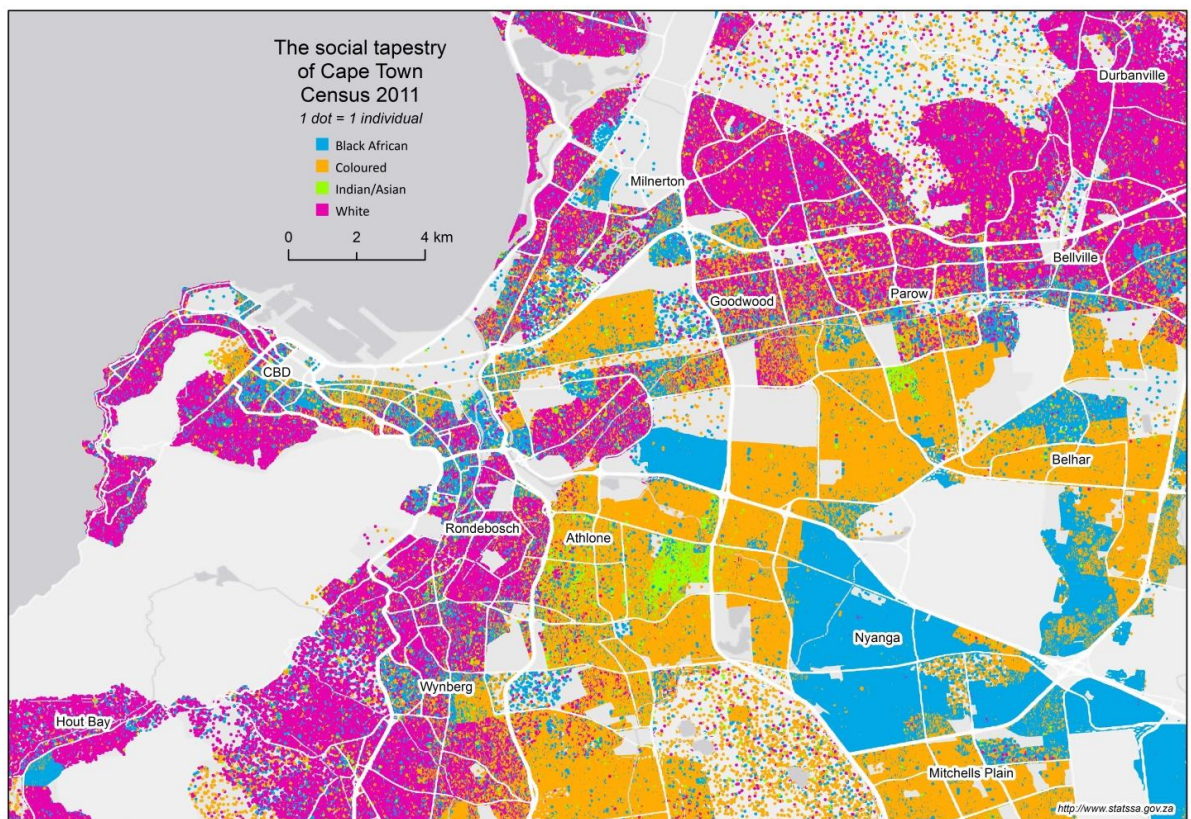


Figure 2.1 Cape Town Post-Apartheid Racial Segregation, 2011

While shared transport's earliest antecedents in Cape Town emerged out of the city officials' slow but successful attempts to organize neighborhoods around race and class between 1910-1976, restricting the mobility of folks living in the area was key to the city's founding.

This section reviews the period in between the Union of South Africa's founding and culminating with the Afrikaner nationalist (NP) National Party post-WWII election win. Related directly with Union's founding out of the remains of the South African War (1899-1902), which pitted "Boers and Britons" against each other before bringing them back together under a shared ethos of white supremacy, the period between 1910-1948 witnessed the lawful dispossession and displacement of black South African property in the founding of the country's public transportation system and the creation of the working conditions of South Africa's earliest taxi drivers, most of whom were white. The chapter uses data on the growth of railway and road construction on the one hand, and coeval population and passenger traffic growth on the other, to show how South Africa's pre-WWII economic growth, large spending on public works (including building roads and human settlements), the expropriation of black wealth, and the doubled concentration of wealth in rich and poor white hands in helped the country's very first law governing goods and services facilitated by motor-cars on public roads. Doing so contextualizes, for the very first time, the Motor Carrier Transport Act of 1930 (the MCTA or the 1930 Act), which included taxiing, within a national climate in which South Africa began building roads with lands expropriated from black landowners and taxes generated from those who wanted to transport goods and capitalize on transport services. No era saw this clearer than the 1920s and 1930s, when car and road travel began (but was nowhere close in)

rivaling railroads, which, for many decades had been the only way to haul cargo and passengers over great distances.

Cape Town was actively involved in reorganizing where groups of people lived and worked based on their identities well before the influx of people of color in the post-World War II period posed a threat to the city's *de facto* and *de jure* segregation policies. Diverse clans of nomadic, pastoralist Khoisan people were the original communities living in the Cape. When the Dutch East India Company (VOC) set up a station on the Cape in 1652, they also displaced Khoisan people's seasonal, small, nomadic homesteads by releasing their French and Dutch indentured laborers from their contracts and equipping them with resources to settle the arable farmlands on the Cape and beyond.¹⁶¹ Some Khoisan people continued to move around the Atlantic Ocean side of South Africa as fishermen and explored the Western interior with herds of sheep, while others remained in the Cape and worked for Dutch professionals. These Khoisan men and women were employed as domestic servants, masons, carpenters, and other workers on the thriving dock. The premiere industries of the multicontinental VOC, shipping and trade, created plenty of jobs for urban Khoisan, even as some of their relatives adopted increasingly rural livelihoods. One of the VOC's major imports were slaves of Central African and Indian Ocean descent because of the destruction of many Khoisan communities, the British laws that prevented the enslavement of indigenous people, and dearth of people the company viewed as suitable hard laborers.

¹⁶¹ See map in Iris Berger, *South Africa in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 33.

The human trading economy was responsible for the slow increase of the overall population of Cape Town by the early 19th century. The ethnic and racial diversity of Cape Town grew exponentially, in tandem with the influx of slaves and the increasing job availability for some nomadic Khoisan communities, and combined with the mixing of white, black, and Indian people, as well as people increasingly recognizing sharing a mixed-race ancestry. Cultural diffusion and miscegenation increased the population of people defined as Coloured more than anything else.¹⁶² The multiracial Cape colonial society therefore tended to order racial groups by class because jobs were abundant, and increasingly so after abolition and after the expansion of intensive diamond mining in 1890s Kimberley. The late-19th century marked the beginning of the free market economy in the Cape, affording the multiracial working-class a lifestyle appropriate to their skills and not necessarily to the color of their skin.

On the surface, the abolition of slavery in 1834 gave black and mixed-race peoples the freedom to go and settle where they pleased.¹⁶³ In the immediate aftermath of slave abolition, however, the term Coloured became increasingly popular amongst many mixed-race communities. “They typically spoke Cape Dutch, which later became the Afrikaans language,” Clifton Crais and Thomas McClendon explained, “and worshiped in the Calvinist faith, though there is a population of Muslims whose history is tied to slaves and exiles to the Cape from what is today Indonesia.”¹⁶⁴ Emerging from a colonial milieu where different mixed-race communities lived amongst each other in all their

¹⁶² John Western, *Outcast Cape Town* (Berkeley: Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 31-39.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

¹⁶⁴ Clifton C. Crais and Thomas V. McClendon, *The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 33.

familial and ancestral diversity, “Coloured” increasingly began to be used as a term which marked who deserved more rights than black people, but fewer rights than white people.¹⁶⁵ While the people who were recognized as Coloured were able to take greater advantage of the freedom to set up housing after abolition than other people of color on the Cape, their relative privilege wasn’t inevitable. In fact, the term Coloured was as contested then as it is today. In any case, 19th century colonialists used the term to dispossess Cape indigenous communities, just as it gave rights to mixed-race Calvinists who spoke Afrikaans.

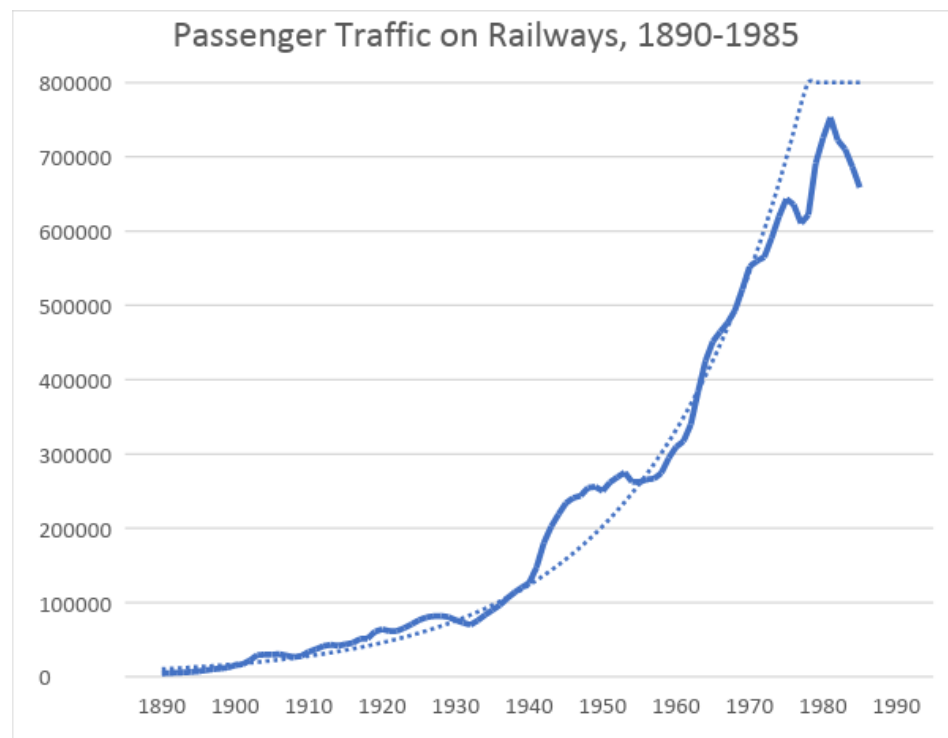


Figure 2.2 Nationwide Passenger Traffic on Railways, 1890-1985

¹⁶⁵ The place of the identity marker “Coloured” and people who identified as Coloured in the middle 19th century in the story of segregation’s development in Cape Town is much more complicated than I am making it here. For the diverse perspectives on the Coloured identities in Cape Town, see Zimitri Erasmus, ed. *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town* (Colorado Springs: International Academic Publishers, 2002).

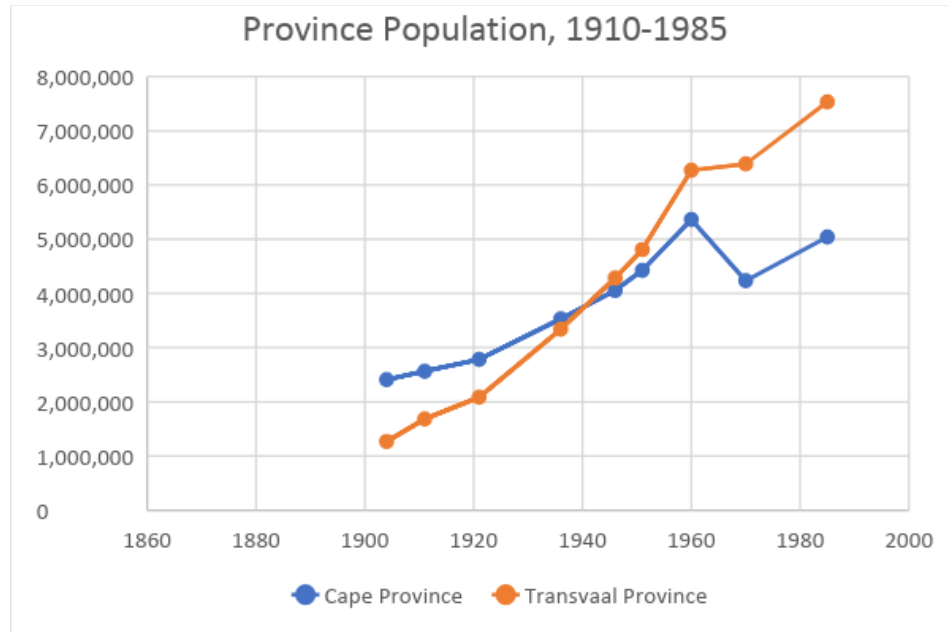


Figure 2.3 Cape Province Population Growth, Relative to Transvaal, 1890-1985

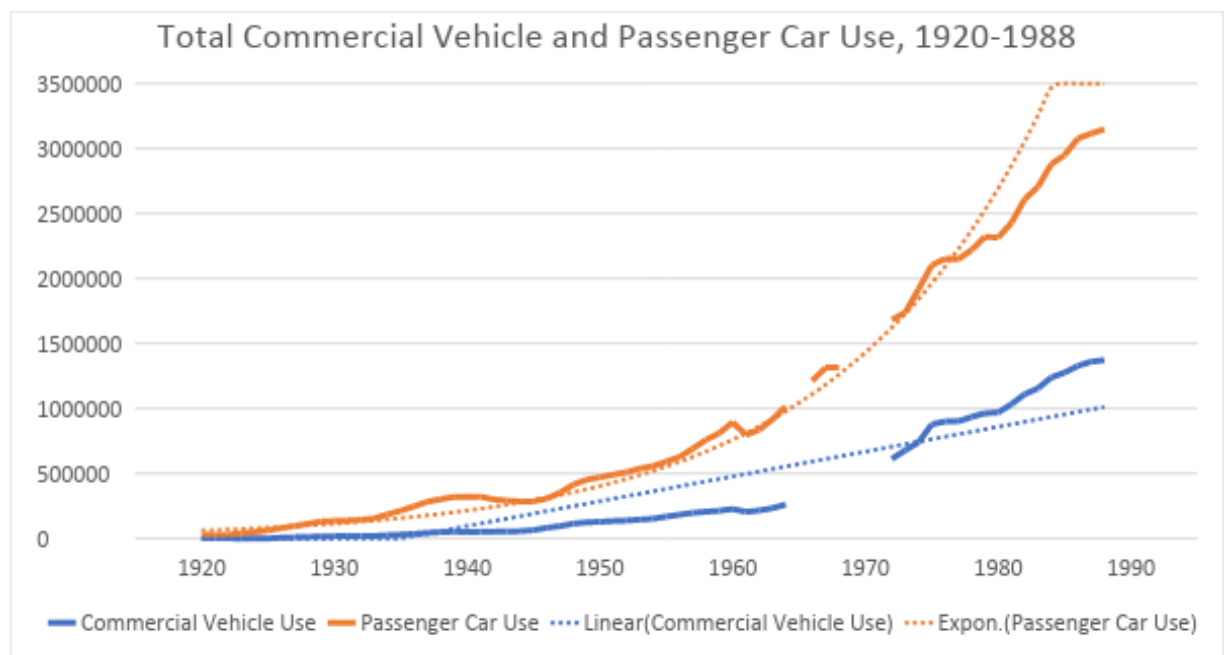


Figure 2.4 Nationwide Commercial Vehicles and Passenger Cars in Use, 1920-1988

The Union of South Africa's 1913 Native Land Act paved the way for road and rail construction, which would create a physical infrastructure for the expansion of motor

cars on roads during apartheid, and make long-distance transport an everyday reality for recently dispossessed and displaced black South Africans. The 1913 Act made it illegal for black South Africans to buy or lease land outside of a tiny, scattered area of land on which few farmers, hunter-gatherers, or pastoralists cared to live, while making it legal for the police to incarcerate tens of thousands of black South Africans who found themselves, as Sol Plaatje did, “a pariah in the land of his birth.”¹⁶⁶ Indeed, while the forces of dispossession and displacement were strong over the decades, the period also saw moments of political organization, like the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) launch a country-wide campaign against the 1913 Act. While the SANNC’s efforts would slow the Union’s land grab, its leaders could not articulate exactly how the Act would set the stage for an expansive network of roads between towns and neighborhoods on which petit-bourgeois business men and women would legally capitalize from in their own rights.

From the fragmentary evidence that we have from the secondary source literature on Cape Town’s social history¹⁶⁷ and archival documents from the colonial city’s administration, two interrelated points distinguish this period from the apartheid period (1948-1994). The first is that the number of motor-taxis were few, their activities were

¹⁶⁶ Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa, before and since the European War and the Boer Rebellion*.

¹⁶⁷ The 1980s and 1990s witnessed a flurry of historical research on Cape Town, particularly from the University of Cape Town’s History Department. In addition to the five previous volumes, see Christopher Saunders et al., eds., *Studies in the History of Cape Town: Volume 6* (Cape Town: History Department, in association with the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1988); Elizabeth van Heyningen, ed. *Studies in the History of Cape Town: Volume Seven* (Cape Town: Cape Town History Project Department of History in association with the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1994).

regulated under the same laws governing horse-drawn carriages and cabs, railroad transport was the only indication of economic growth, and the people who were licensed to drive taxis were mostly poor white immigrants from Europe. Second, the riders were part of a settler elite who were important for maintaining the norms of a colonial society, but were inefficient indicators of economic growth. These conditions framed a South Africa whereby whites from a variety of diverse backgrounds jockeyed with each other in small legal skirmishes like the Craigen case, while black South Africans were fast becoming migrant laborers who relied on railroad passenger travel to work on mines far from their families. While a commercial class of white South Africans used horse-drawn carriages and cabs, and then motor-taxis, to travel for leisure, black South Africans were not only traveling for work, but also to live in a country that grew a large road and rail infrastructure on shuffling around black communities. Motor-taxis and their antecedents, therefore, helped white traders and settlers navigate a colonial city and build out a colonial society across an entire state.

The implication of this chapter on transport and apartheid's historical antecedents is that no study of public transportation, especially that of South Africa's shared minibus taxi, should begin without illuminating the destructive forces of displacement and dispossession, both of which made collective transportation *en masse* necessary for displaced and dispossessed people, and also created new terrains of struggle, like the roads between impoverished black townships. In order to illuminate the historical conditions of colonial, pre-apartheid era dispossession and displacement as something which helped to transform the 1893 Hackneys Carriages and Cabs Act by applying it to motor-taxis in J. C. Le Roux's 1930 Act, this chapter begins with an overview of Cape

Town's early history as well as the history of its early systems of transport, which were reluctantly regulated.¹⁶⁸

Historical Antecedents of Transport in Cape Town

By 1908, the railroad moved the most people throughout South Africa. It transported migrant workers to the mines and the middle-class from port city to port city. The railroad also generated the most profits. Every week, Cape Town's major newspapers reported the earnings of railroad companies in the country and also contrasted these earnings against railroad companies in Europe and the United States (Figure 2.2).

Dovetailing railroads' growing usage, newspapers in the early 20th century told horrifying stories of accidents that seemed to occur every day around railroads. Migrant workers, especially, made headlines when their bodies were found bisected along railroad tracks by the mines.¹⁶⁹ Outside of newspaper coverage, the second stanza of a popular Sotho mine workers' song documents how they saw railroads displacing indigenous communities as well as the farms that dispossessed black communities decades prior.

We came to the railway magistrate; We came and asked him where our deserter's train was. He said it was still in the stable, the favorite cow – Its herders are still polishing it. Instantly it came down from Bloemfontein, short-

¹⁶⁸ I could have begun the story even earlier, with the abolition of slavery in the Cape Province in 1834, or the mineral revolution in the 1880s, and connect both to the country's interwar period, which was one of the few places in the world to witness massive industrial growth in the face of global economic crises. Like elsewhere throughout the second half of the 19th century, once freed one from of servitude, slaves, like dispossessed and displaced black South Africans in townships, continued in positions of servitude in moments of promise, and such was the case in Cape Town. See, for example, Nigel Worden, "Slave Apprenticeship in Cape Town, 1834-1838," in *Studies in the History of Cape Town, Volume Seven* (Cape Town: Cape Town History Project Department of History in association with the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1994).

¹⁶⁹ "How Natives Travel North," *Cape Times*, January 7 1912; "Railway Accommodations for Natives," *Cape Times*, January 6 1910.

cutting hyena. You know, I said, sons of my father, You enter it through sides here; It's the horse of our distant forefathers; It was tamed by the Boers, in times of old. You know, there were young men feared to ride, I rode it, I, Child of Rakhali. When that train moved, it performed miracles; It began to do amazing feats: Rail spikes popped, joints jumped up and down. You know, at the sidings it passed in a hurry, Well, it took notice of no one... When it leaves here, it will run fast – yes, the train. It showed it was ridden by a wandering man. When it left, it went wandering, It went wandering as if it had stolen something away. It coughed as if it might spit; It murmured as if it would speak. The train rattled like the dying Chief Makhaola. You know it when it entered Bloemfontein Sengae, That's when it began to knock at the door. The managers in charge at Bloemfontein Opened all the crossings, The train showed it was ridden by a true wandering man. Up spoke the Madam, wife of the whiteman, "What's wrong with this train?" "Haeka! It runs Number 17 too fast." You know, a poor Boer was running, His cap twisted sideways. A lion was running, its colors hide turned inside out, You know, when it came to the other side, To Tikoe, the European place (mines), I was saying these whitethorn trees would spear it. Whitehorns, the train pierced the spear-sharp whitethorns. A Bushman's ghost jumped from the culvert – With our own eyes we saw it; The ghost of the Bushman was dreadful. Girl herding there headed for the train to stop it; It did not even wait. They insulted it, saying, "You asshole Boer's train." Do you know where you are filing to? A madman with iron legs, Hyena, it rocked side to side. You listen, my fathers, My friends, I feel I want to praise a train. You say a train does not know [and] appreciate it? You come to me, Rakhali's Child; I may reveal for you things about the train... It saw Francolins birds hopping quickly; It saw sheep grazing; It took fright at a hyena and lost the rails. Its whitemen, you sill see they put these iron blinkers on its cheeks; It's so that it gets used to looking down the road. Why should I speak this way? My fathers, my parents, My heart is in pain.¹⁷⁰

Cape Town's middle-class also feared for their safety. In January of 1910, scores of concerned citizens in Cape Town wrote letters to the editor of the *Cape Times* urging the city to fix broken platforms, to set speed limits, and to update signage so that professionals traveling from the suburbs to the city could do so safely.¹⁷¹ Trams posed

¹⁷⁰ Taken from Anonymous, "Mine Workers' Songs," in *The South Africa Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, ed. Clifton C. Crais and Thomas V. McClendon (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014). For more songs, see David B. Coplan and Seakhi Santho, eds., *Lyrics of Basotho Migrants* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

¹⁷¹ The following letter is important because it demonstrates how unclear liability is in the early 20th century. They write, "Who, sir, would have been accountable if that gentleman

similar threats to the public's safety. Although there were fewer letters to the editor complaining about them, trams too made headlines when pedestrians and commuters were rushed to the hospital after being run over. The fact that these forms of heavy rail were claiming lives sent the message that travel was dangerous. It was no coincidence that stories about commuter travel appeared frequently in Cape Town's January newspapers. January was the height of vacation travel to Cape Town. But even though trains and trams were so dangerous, the companies that ran these forms of transport were rarely liable for the deaths and injuries. When accidents occurred, the pedestrian was blamed for being incompetent – for crossing the rails when a train or tram was coming, or for stumbling and getting caught on the rails, etc.¹⁷² Thus, the 1893 Hackney Cabs and Carriages Act never applied to forms of heavy rail. Generally, carriages, carts, bicycles, the motor car, and eventually taxicabs could only be held criminally negligent and charged and tried for injuring pedestrians. It was within this context and legal environment that taxi needed to negotiate when entrepreneurs sought to create business models based on the taxi.

In the years prior to the unification of the Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and Orange River colonies in 1910, and the subsequent eradication of black land ownership in 1913, South Africa imported its first mechanical jitneys – the motor-taxi – one of the minibus taxis' earliest precursors.¹⁷³ Early motor taxi regulations importantly fashioned how

had lost his life had the train started, as it did?" F.B.B, "Cape Town Station: To the Editor," *ibid.*, January 21.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ Here I distinguish “motor taxis” (the early 20th century motor cars) from “minibus taxis” (the mid-20th century vans) and “jitneys” (any vehicle or carriage – motorized and not motorized – that was used as a cab across the entire 20th century).

people would use other sorts of mechanical jitneys over the rest of the 20th century, the minibus taxi in particular. J. C. Le Roux's Motor Carrier Transportation Act of 1930 (the 1930 Act) was the first law to regulate the activities of automobiles transporting passengers or goods on paved or dirt roads for profit. Since it had no restrictions on the race of who could obtain a license under its authority, it was also the first to open up the opportunity for drivers of any background to make a living. But, who were these drivers? What were the roads and their driving conditions like? And how could one find success?

When South Africa's first motor taxis appeared in Cape Town in 1908, however, the Hackney Carriages and Cabs Act of 1893 (HCC) governed their operations. The HCC was written for horse-drawn carriages and cabs, but became applied to motor cabs in 1903, finally coming into effect in 1908.¹⁷⁴ Since popular opinion held railroads above all other vehicles as transportation's premiere economic driver, and "since there was almost no road transportation to speak of at the beginning of the century and also little competition between road and rail," horse-drawn carriages and motor cabs were of very little consequence, and could thus be conflated under the law.¹⁷⁵

Transport Leading Up to WWII

Formed in the interwar 1920s, which saw South Africa use racist tactics to restructure the gold mining industry to shield its national economy from the lows following the Great Depression,¹⁷⁶ the Union appointed J. C. Le Roux to help build a taxing structure in order to capitalize on the growing popularity of automobiles

¹⁷⁴ Janisch.

¹⁷⁵ McCaul, 36.

¹⁷⁶ Thompson, 154.

transporting goods and people.¹⁷⁷ The 1930 Act in effect created two new administrative bodies: local road transportation boards (LRTBs) to decide who and under what conditions a driver could hold a motor carrier certificate to transport goods or people for a fee; and the National Transport Commission (NTC) in Cape Town to oversee the country's regional LRTBs. "While the act initially contained no regulations for motor cars carrying more than seven passengers," Colleen McCaul explained, summarizing her research on the intended effects of the 1930 Act for taxis, "the NTC said in a report in March 1932 that steps had to be taken soon to amend the act so as to bring taxi operators within the ambit of the act."¹⁷⁸ However, South Africa built few motor taxis to carry more than five passengers, so in 1941, the NTC amended the Act, limiting the number of passengers in taxis to six people (5 passengers and 1 driver). Since the intended effects the 1930 Act were to tax the growing motor transport industry, and supplement the railroad industry's might, rather than supplant it, no one has written on the act's roots in colonial dispossession and displacement.

While the country 1930 Act's effects on black taxi businesses. While it was legal for anyone who qualified as a taxi driver to become one, LRTBs furthest from administrative oversight at the Cape Town NTC routinely discriminated against black South Africans, preventing them from acquiring coveted taxi licenses.¹⁷⁹ While some were able to acquire licenses and fleets of their own, the pre-apartheid state in collaboration with LRTBs, saw most black South Africans as users of transport, and

¹⁷⁷ Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Africa, Asia & Oceania, 1750-1988*, 730.

¹⁷⁸ McCaul, 37.

¹⁷⁹ Khosa, "Changing State Policy and the Black Taxi Industry in Soweto." Also, interview with Godfrey Ntlatleng, published in McCaul, 37-38.

rarely as owners.¹⁸⁰ Khosa viewed legislation as a moment of newfound opportunity for would-be taxi drivers. Khosa argued that prior to the 1977 Act, taxi operators ran their businesses in what he called historical moment when “racial discrimination, lack of access to capital, and a minefield of restrictive inappropriate legislation were obstacles to the growth of small black enterprises.”¹⁸¹ Thus, combined with what Khosa saw as the relaxation of these restrictions after the Soweto Uprising and the economic momentum some taxi owners gained in the political environment of the 1960s and 1970s, the 1977 Road Transportation Act crucially incentivized existing taxi operators’ desire to grow their businesses and created the possibility for newcomers to enter a burgeoning taxi industry.

While the 1930 Act would primarily concerned with marking the limits of what kinds of road transportation could travel where and with what goods in order to ensure that each bus and automobile contributes substantially to the South African economy, and with the least risk of creating unneeded competition between the modes, people in Cape Town could only imagine road transportation as some amalgam of the existing modes of transport of the turn of the 20th century. These were human-pushed carts, horse-drawn carriages, and steam- and coal-fueled engines on trains and ships. Since the latter of which (i.e. carriages, trains, and ships) were not wholly accessible to South Africans who did not immediately have commercial interests in them, whether in service of the British by the middle of the 19th century or the Dutch in the centuries prior, transport by any means besides the head had a European character, and needed to be legislated as such.

¹⁸⁰ Khosa, "Changing Patterns of 'Black' Bus Subsidies in the Apartheid City, 1944–1986."

¹⁸¹ Khosa, "Changing State Policy and the Black Taxi Industry in Soweto," 183-84.

The precedents on which transport laws could be based had little pertinence to the colonies like South Africa. This was because transport was geared toward very short (i.e. carts within cities and towns) or very long-distances (i.e. ships and trains). Thus, “there was no control over the conveyance of passengers or goods by road before 1930,” Colleen McCaul explained of the period leading up to the 1976/77/78 taxi boom, “since there was almost no road transportation to speak of at the beginning of the century and also little competition between road and rail.”¹⁸² It was only by the turn of the century when cities anywhere in the world, and especially cities like Cape Town, attempted to trouble the genteel character of city streets with mechanical beasts, which, like railroads, were best situated far from residences, especially that of the middle-classes. But Britain, America, and South Africa’s industrial revolutions started to change the characteristics that made cities desirable.

Indeed, the demographics in South African cities like Cape Town would also change dramatically over the course of the late 19th century. Up until that point in time, Cape Town was quite ethnically and racially diverse, and citizens living there organized themselves around a shared working-class class more than they did by race.¹⁸³ The late 19th-century witnessed the suburbanization of Cape Town and subsequent flight of the white elite from the central business district. This period was characterized by the fear that the white elite had of black South Africans at the turn of the century.

¹⁸² McCaul, 36.

¹⁸³ Vivian Bickford-Smith, "The Origins and Early History of District Six to 1910," in *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present*, ed. Shamil Jeppie, Crain Soudien, and Hands Off District Six Committee (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1990).

From the start of the 20th century, a new machine – the automobile – slowly acquired a personality distinct from other modes of transport like railroads and horse-drawn carriages as its human users made new mistakes, and as the government, in turn, worked to prevent proliferation of injuries. Taxi's physical qualities (i.e. horns, bells, brakes, and headlamps), drivers' skill and moral sobriety, the public's skepticism about unfeeling automobiles operating on roads where living people and animals roamed, combined with a newly realized country struggling to make sense of negligence around automobiles to produce an environment in which those machines gradually acquired more feeling and better relationships with human beings and animals. This process was particularly salient in an African context, where technology was less about the imports of foreign machines, but about the functioning of a society under laws governing the spirit world, and within a context of colonialism and modernization. It is within this framework that the motor-taxi became animated to such an extent that only humanistic laws could curb their dangerous potential.

The Cape Times and *The Cape Argus* from early 20th century, as well as some of the earliest motor taxi licenses in South Africa reveal a “dangerous” world of motor-cars for hire when the first motor-taxi was introduced in 1908. This chapter pays close attention to the multiple applications taxi drivers filed after losing their licenses after injuring pedestrians. I examine the world of travel leisure that newspapers advertised to illuminate the limits of Cape Town's settler and commercial public's tolerance of new transport technology when South Africa first became a Union in 1910 – a polity which saw white South Africans across national and ethnic identities joining together at the

expense of the country's black majority.¹⁸⁴ The newspaper coverage of motor-taxis I found getting into accidents and the recklessness of their drivers imbued the new mode of public transport with a personality. Importantly, the most reckless taxi drivers highlighted were not only irresponsible cabbies, but were also portrayed as dishonorable men. Thus, this chapter shows how criminal justice in early 20th century Cape Town – South Africa's legislative capital – made poor driving a character flaw, permanently instilling moral requirements in granting taxi licenses nationally. To do so, I turn to court cases and newspaper clippings to argue that efforts to solve the "problem" of traveling black male bodies spilling into urban public space framed the laws governing the first motor taxis. While transport historians citing Charles van Onselen locate minibus taxis' beginnings in South Africa's Witwatersrand mining center, 1,300 km away,¹⁸⁵ I connect the Rand to the Cape to reveal how elite traveling culture on ships, in cars, and by rail interacted with the routine transporting of mineworkers to set the standards for motor taxi riders' experiences as far away as Cape Town. In so doing, I build on van Onselen's study of horse-drawn cab culture in Johannesburg to expand what we know about the earliest understandings of South Africa's taxi.¹⁸⁶

In the history of automobiles globally, car safety only became a concern nearly a century later, in the 1970s. In U.S. automobile history, two sides of a debate about the car maker's role in determining safety standards emerged. On one side, car engineers and the car-driving public advocated for social and behavioral reform to curb the numbers of

¹⁸⁴ Thompson.

¹⁸⁵ Khosa, "Capital Accumulation, the Apartheid State and the Rise of the Black Taxi Industry in Johannesburg and Soweto, 1930-1990."

¹⁸⁶ Van Onselen.

deaths from driving. Safety advocates recognized, for example, that many cars have seatbelts, but the majority of drivers did not use them. So, the advocates pushed for more public education to get drivers to use them every time they drove. On the other side of the debate, safety advocates pushed for more changes to automobile technologies themselves. It was these advocates that helped make airbags, for example, standard in automobiles. “Only once both sides of the argument began to redefine the opposing strategy as a complementary strategy,” Westmore shows,” did either side have any significant effect on the driving public.”¹⁸⁷ But this agreement between social behaviorists and mechanical determinists only came about in the 1980s, nearly a hundred years after Ford’s Model-T.

An increasing automobile culture within a socio-geographic landscape whereby roads are built and railroad tracks laid down, necessitating transport provisions that help municipal economies bring laborers from ghettos to the CBD, can only exacerbated commuting laborers’ dispossession and displacement. Todd Litman shows that when cars become luxury goods in developed and developing nations, a simple desire to own a car creates a culture of automobile fetishism that has significant social ramifications.

Automobile fetishism, Litman argues, never produces a net gain for any community.¹⁸⁸

Litman uses the term “positional value” to capture the desire for driving luxury cars.

“[While] positional goods confer status on their users,” Litman explains, “this benefit is

¹⁸⁷ Jameson M. Westmore, "Implementing Restraint: Automobile Safety and the US Debate over Technological and Social Fixes," in *Car Troubles: Critical Studies of Automobility and Auto-Mobility*, ed. Jim Conley and Arlene Tigar McLaren (Surrey, England

Vermont, USA: Ashgate Publishers, 2009), 122.

¹⁸⁸ Todd Litman, "Mobility as a Positional Good: Implications for Transport Policy and Planning," *ibid.*

offset by reduced status to others, resulting in little to no net benefit to society.”¹⁸⁹

Purchasing automobiles as luxuries only exacerbate social distinctions and differential class- and race-based access to necessities. This situation impacts the choices future transportation planners make. Transport gets “more costly, faster resource-intensive,” Litman tells us, displacing “cheaper, slower, more resource-efficient modes,” which makes people travel further and use more resources to make that travel more comfortable.¹⁹⁰ Thus, the growth of automobile industries and consumer car culture in places where cars give their owners a sense of entitlement helps build a network of infrastructural growth that exhausts cities’ financial resources as well as individuals’ emotional capacities. Thus, when combined with gross inequalities and colonial projects to engineer society along the lines of race and class, mass car consumption creates what Heathcote Williams calls an “Autogeddon” where societies become slave to cars, and that disproportionately impacts poor people lives than their wealthier counterparts.¹⁹¹

To what extent did the law place blame on horses for carriage accidents? To what extent did the law place blame on cars for automobile accidents? To what extent did the law place blame on the carriage driver? To what extent did the law place blame on the carriage driver or the chauffeur? I used to get pulled over driving 62mph in a 55mph zone a lot. Colleagues told me driving 7mph over the limit was acceptable. Well, not for me! So, now I drive 59mph in a 55mph zone, maximum! Driving 4mph over the limit seems to have done the trick. Sheriffs and cops whiz by now. No sirens, no nothing. In my mind, I think that my white colleagues either lied to me or cops just treated me

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 214.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Heathcote Williams, *Autogeddon* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991).

differently. *They* can drive 62mph, but I can't go above 60mph. Those thoughts direct my behavior. Those same thoughts make me suspicious of white people. Their fictions and my experiences create a two-way road where even the law or its implementation is socially constructed. And even if this is the case, the cop always gets to decide what's right and what's wrong about my behavior.

The question of who was liable when it came to disease and public health was particularly important at this point in the Union of South Africa's early history (1900s and 1910s) because health concerns would often be used as justifiers for forcibly removing Africans from urban areas – in the case of Cape Town, dock workers were moved to some of the earliest townships in 1918.¹⁹²

Laws against taxi drivers who injured people were few, but very strict. Taxi drivers who injured pedestrians were charged under a 1893 law that was originally meant for horse-drawn carriages.¹⁹³ The law stated that a driver could be charged and tried for the pedestrian's injury if he was "wrongfully" and "unlawfully negligent."¹⁹⁴ Thus, in all of the trials that I found, the prosecution attempted to prove somehow that the taxi driver was a danger to the public's well-being.¹⁹⁵ As this law continued to be extrapolated from carriages to taxis, Cape Town was also trying to think through how to incorporate taxicabs into an already very diverse transportation system. In the early 20th century, one

¹⁹² Western.

¹⁹³ Office of the Inspector, "Negligent Driving by William Craigen, Licensed Driver of Taxi Cab No. 59," ed. A Division Urban Police District (Cape Town: National Archives of South Africa, 1911).

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ "Correspondence Re Cancellation of License-Taxi Cab Driver William Craigen," (Cape Town: National Archives of South Africa (NASA), 1911-1913); "Woodstock Motor Case," *Cape Times*, January 27 1910.

could get around by ship, railroad, tram, motor car, or carriage. The elite tended to use these modes of transport the most. In this context, taxis earned their unique positionality within the already vibrant transportation network. The public expressed skeptical views of taxis in newspapers as the 1910s, it was this skepticism about the potential for new transport bodies to contribute to the public good that would become the very foundation for the 1893 Act, and then the 1930 Act.

Mobility and Slave Abolition in Cape Town

Several narratives of travel and transportation fueled by white supremacy emerged out of this historical context of industrialization and increasing employment opportunities, racial mixing, different people living side-by-side with each other. While the VOC placed its Dutch and French farmers at the top of the economic and social order, not all whites were rich because farming doesn't guarantee revenue, and many of the poorest farmers reaped little reward from the cultural and economic life emanating from the docks and the central business district. Uncomfortable with their economic and social descent from the white aristocracy, thousands of disgruntled *trekboer* farmers moved north-east, into the interior of the country as early as the 17th century, but in increasing numbers after slave abolition. They went by foot and wagon, and their Great Trek became remembered as the founding moment of Afrikaner nationalism.¹⁹⁶ Their separation from the city and people of color working in the city would define them as a

¹⁹⁶ Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, 2nd ed., expanded and updated (Charlottesville: Cape Town, South Africa: University of Virginia Press: Tafelberg, 2009).

people, and lay the groundwork for the most significant segregationist laws under apartheid.

Meanwhile, in Cape Town, the majority of whites who benefitted from the colonial economy were urban-dwelling and middle-class. Economic and social life, at first, took place on Adderley Street. “Adderley Street was the centre of all business and commercial activity and being the principal street of the largest town in South Africa [in the 1860s],” Peter Buirski explained, “it reflected all that was most advanced in the domestic economy – it was in fact, a microcosm of the Colony’s development.”¹⁹⁷ Combined with the growing mixed-race populations, the departure of many Afrikaners out of the city – many stayed behind and formed a particular Afrikaner land-owning agricultural elite – and the increasing social mobility of people of color began to threaten, in their minds of white *burghers* (citizens), the economic and social order of the urban elites. In retaliation, the white elite used their cultural and financial capital to exclude who they saw as racial outsiders. Nowhere was this made clearer than in social spaces like passenger trains from the CBD to nearby suburbs, which saw people of all backgrounds used as the country began to witness its mineral revolution and large numbers of people began to converge on the Rand in Johannesburg, shifting the process of urbanization into two cities rather than one. One letter to the editor in the *Cape Times* in 1889 even reinforced the idea that people of color were slowly becoming excluded from all social spaces.

¹⁹⁷ Peter Buirski, "An Analysis of the Composition of Adderley Street, Cape Town, between 1867 and 1884," in *Studies in the History of Cape Town: Volume 3*, ed. Christopher Saunders and Howard Phillips (Cape Town: History Department, in association with the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1980), 19.

As a matter of experience black passengers are not commonly met with in the saloons of steamships, or in the first-class railway carriages, or in the reserved seats of the theatres, or in the best pews in churches or chapels, or in bathing machines and bathing houses, or at hotel tables, or even in the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association.¹⁹⁸

In addition to the elite social circles the *Cape Times* illuminated, working-class communities also saw racial segregation. "By the mid-1880s," Vivian Bickford-Smith observed, "the vast majority of whites involved in mining or railway building were in skilled or supervisory positions."¹⁹⁹ Certainly a racial component stratified the working-class in the 19th century. However, the phenomenon of whites and people of color working together was also prevalent in working-class communities. Public transport, however, would further divide South Africans by race, in the same way railway carriages incubated whites-only spaces, particularly for the elite.

The emergence of electric and horse-drawn busses (i.e. the earliest forms of public road transportation) in the late-19th century aided social mobilization for all Capetonians after 1834. Free people of color from all racial backgrounds could look for work and live wherever they chose. Constantly moving due to the conjectures of the economy, the citizens of Cape Town were finally able to order their movement along the newly created passenger rail lines. Passenger transport by this time was established as a necessary structure for the economic growth of the city. As a result, the white elite made sure that measures were created to maintain *de facto* segregation, although everyday

¹⁹⁸ *Cape Times*, 7 December 1889. Quoted in Vivian Bickford-Smith, "A 'Special Tradition of Multi-Racialism?' Segregation in Cape Town in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *The Agry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape*, ed. Wilmot Godfrey James and Mary Simons (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), 50.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

integration was inevitable. The white elite created separate first-class cars, for example. Of course, affluent mixed-race people could pay for a ticket, pass as a white person among the patrons, and ride in the nicer cars as well. Black workers also worked alongside, albeit underneath, white supervisors on the railroads. Meanwhile, several Indian shops sprung up all over the central business district, importing goods from all over the foot of Africa and abroad. These phenomena were not only connected by the railroads, but these places of business existed in walking distance from the slowly suburbanizing train stations and the urban core.

What was more difficult to assess that public transport's influence in the CBD, however, was its impact inside the residential neighborhoods that grew along the railroads. It was in these places where Cape Town saw *de facto* segregation and fewer opportunities to integrate because land was scarce and in the hands of a small elite. The separate neighborhoods socialized racism into the minds of every Cape Town citizen. As whites became more advantaged in their seclusion, they were able to set a strong precedent for white supremacy and black inferiority in the Cape's elite social circles long before the National Party came into power. Before politics were involved and segregation became a legal and policy formation, the economic incentives of white supremacy were the prize. This could be seen most clearly in the areas and homes in which whites lived.

The extension of the Simon's Town and Wynberg railroad lines ran from the Central Station on Adderley Street, in the heart of Cape Town's CBD, east through Woodstock, then south through Observatory, Mowbray, Rondebosch, Newlands, Claremont, Wynberg, and all the way to the naval town of Simonstown. Established in 1864, and paid for in a joint effort between the Cape Town local government and private

partners, the Wynberg railroad allowed white people and others who could afford to purchase property outside the CBD to have a way of getting from their new homes to work and city amenities.²⁰⁰ This chain of suburbs grew into one of the two main white suburban ribbons in Cape Town. The second line of suburbs (Sea Point, Fresnaye, Clifton, and Hout Bay) differed significantly because they were not connected to any railroad lines.²⁰¹ Cape Town's early suburbanization mimicked the tastes of elites from its urban contemporaries around the world who looked at the congested character of urban life with disdain, and sought to reclaim space outside of suburbs and create more genteel space.

Before the suburbs along the Simon's Town and Wynberg lines became known as the Southern Suburbs, the area had primarily been used for farming. The homes that the rich purchased on lands with larger acreage afforded them more privacy than did the houses closer to the CBD. In fact, by the late 19th century, residential areas in the center

²⁰⁰ Old Wynberg Village Society, "Transport History," <http://oldwynberg.co.za/railway.htm>.

²⁰¹ The main belt of residential neighborhoods in the early 20th century was spread along the Wynberg railroad line. When this line was extended to Simon's Town – the furthest residential area from the CBD, on the Cape of Good Hope peninsula – it afforded the building of even more removed, coastal suburbs on False Bay. The main point to take away from this map is that the creation of the Wynberg and Simon's Town railroad line sparked the rapid suburbanization of Cape Town. Western, 34. A similar phenomenon to the first case occurred in the United States in the mid- to late-19th century. Historians attributed the United States' suburbanization to its growth of public transportation. "Between 1815 and 1875, Americas largest cities underwent a dramatic spatial change," Kenneth Jackson explained. "The introduction of the steam ferry, the omnibus, the commuter railroad, the horsecar, the elevated railroad, and the cable car gave additional impetus to an exodus that would turn cities 'inside out' and inaugurate a new pattern of suburban affluence and center despair." Jackson concluded, "the result was hailed as the inevitable outcome of the desirable segregation of commercial from residential areas and of the disadvantaged from the more comfortable." Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 20.

city were becoming grossly overcrowded. And, whether due to the escalating cost of living comfortably in a more urban environment or the threat of people of color living too close to the property zones of rich landowners, white flight ensued at the turn of the 20th century.²⁰² Life in the suburbs also gave whites with money the exclusivity they were looking for at a relatively low cost. Such was true, also, in the United States. “In all cultures, the price of land falls with greater and greater distance from city centers,” Jackson explained of the late-19th century. “Thus, the amount of space devoted to a single dwelling will always logically be greater on the periphery than at the center.”²⁰³ To make sure that poorer people would still be excluded from the more distant suburbs, railroad fares were not standardized. The price for a working-class person to live and commute further from the CBD was significantly higher than it would have been if they lived in the inner-city, in over-crowded conditions, and around informal settlements. Jackson was correct when he wrote that “suburban affluence” created “center despair” in the United States. It happened in Cape Town too.

The Sea Point and Hout Bay suburbs – which were significantly closer to Cape Town’s CBD than the Southern Suburbs, albeit physically separated by Table Mountain – only came into existence after the city built Victoria Road as the thoroughfare to connect

²⁰² The pattern of white settlement along the railroad and tramway lines of 19th century Cape Town was plotted in Western, 44. The areas with the highest densities of white settlement were in Sea Point, Gardens, Woodstock, Observatory, and the suburbs along the Wynberg and Simon’s Town railroad lines to False Bay. The most affluent whites lived higher up on the slopes of Table Mountain. Those lower-density highland areas allowed the rich to build exclusive and extravagant homes with breathtaking views of the city, bays, and Atlantic Ocean.

²⁰³ Jackson, 6.

the two suburbs in 1887.²⁰⁴ Preceding this, the Cape Town and Green Point Tramway Company was established in 1863.²⁰⁵ The company ran horse-drawn tramways from the Center Station to the inaccessible Sea Point, and picked up the slack for the absence of a railway. These tramways also serviced routes from the Center Station to the Southern Suburbs, much the same as the Simon's Town railway line, which pit the railway and tramway companies against each other. Wanting to be a step ahead in servicing the rich, white elite, more exclusive tramways were created by the City Tramway Company Limited in 1879. The Company's tramways serviced the Atlantic Ocean side of Table Mountain and coastal suburban neighborhoods, running from Sea Point to Camps Bay. The roads and tramways that connected Camps and Hout Bays, as well as Sea Point, allowed the white elite to utilize public transport and Table Mountain as devices for segregation through built and natural environments, a pattern whose legacy is visible in the urban geography of Cape Town today, with lines hardened by the removals and urban planning of 20th century and apartheid policies.²⁰⁶

Benjamin & Lawton: South Africa's First Motor Taxi Company

Petty transport entrepreneurship in South Africa began at the turn of the century, when New York City opened its fiercely debated underground commuter metro system

²⁰⁴ Find better secondary source on bus history in Cape Town. Right now it's the Cape Town tourism website CUE: Creating Unforgettable Experiences, History of Cape Town, South Africa.

²⁰⁵ Find better secondary source on bus history in Cape Town. These trams were the precursor system of public transportation to the Golden Arrow bus company. A general history is available on the Golden Arrow website.

²⁰⁶ Ivan Turok, "Persistent Polarisation Post-Apartheid? Progress toward Urban Integration in Cape Town," *Urban Studies* 38, no. 13 (2001).

and the London Motor-cab was all the rage in Europe.²⁰⁷ In 1908 Benjamin and Lawton (B&L) was the first company in South Africa to take note of the profits that taxicabs were generating in cities like London and Paris, and they hoped to replicate the model in Cape Town, but they first needed to convince the government that the taxicab would be safe and a reasonable investment for the town before distributing licenses to potential drivers.²⁰⁸ Horse-drawn cabs were in trouble by the time B&L imported their motor taxis. “In the midst of a capitalist revolution, and without the protection which the old pre-war rural bourgeoisie afforded them,” van Onselen explained of Johannesburg, the country’s industrial center, “the bargaining power of those involved in horse-drawn transport was rapidly being ebbed away.”²⁰⁹ “In December 1908 the cabbies’ worst fears were realized when the Town Council announced,” van Onselen explained, “that its first application for permission to run a [motor] taxi service in the city” was being granted.²¹⁰

In 1908, Benjamin and Lawton proposed to import 2 taxicabs from London to experiment in Cape Town. The company also proposed that the taxicab be regulated under Hackney Carriages and Cabs Act, which made sense since there were few laws regulating private motor cars and even fewer regulating the exotic motor-taxi. In the proposal, taxicab drivers would be held responsible for the public's safety in the same ways that carriages and cars were, and would charge rates that were similar to ordinary cabs. In response to the proposal, the Colonial Secretary wrote in May 1908 that, "motor

²⁰⁷ Michael W. Brooks, *Subway City: Riding the Trains ; Reading New York* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 4.

²⁰⁸ "Additional Taxi Cab Stand in Adderley Street," (Cape Town: National Archives of South Africa (NASA), 1909).

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 193.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

drivers should be more severely tested from the point of physical condition and skill. One conviction for drunkenness should suffice to disqualify or cancel licenses."²¹¹ In addition to the health of the driver, the car too needed to be in good condition. "Brakes should be inspected far more frequently [than the cars of ordinary drivers. And] inspections should be [conducted] by experts – mechanical or electrical – as the case may be."²¹² All of these provisions would need to be adhered to before taxi licenses could be granted and before taxis could operate. What these particular regulations showed was that the colonial government was not only concerned with the public's safety, but also with the health of the driver and the car – both needed to be fit for Cape Town society. The early taxi entrepreneurs completely agreed with the colony's stipulations, not simply because they wanted to prevent accidents, but because they knew that they would be held liable for any damages if accidents did occur.

What is useful to know about B&L was that before they petitioned to import taxis, they were primarily in the business of the detailing and the maintenance of motor cars.²¹³ Both Sydney Benjamin and E.J. Lawton owned successful garages that catered to Cape Town's elite. The majority of the cars in their service belonged to members of society who owned them or to the manufacturers who left them in their garage's care. Because of the nature of their business, liability was a significant concern. When Benjamin and Lawton combined their businesses, their letterhead read, "Clients cars are covered by insurance for which a nominal charge is made. Customer cars are only driven by our staff

²¹¹ Colonial Secretary, "Cape Town Motor Cab Regulations," (Cape Town: National Archives of South Africa (NASA), 1908).

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ "Taxi Cabs: Correspondence with Benjamin and Lawton (and Regulation)," (Cape Town: National Archives of South Africa (NASA), 1912).

at customers own risk & responsibility."²¹⁴ Thus, it is important to note that Benjamin and Lawton were not just two guys interested in simply experimenting with taxis. They were savvy businessmen who took all necessary measures to protect their business and maximize profits. Recognizing the positionality of the motor car in the early 20th century and the implications of creating a business model based on a car for hire, Benjamin and Lawton hoped to preempt failure by working with the government to shape the law and the regulation of their activities. As the law stood in 1908 (extrapolated from the 1893 law for carriages), if a potential taxi driver harmed the public's safety in any way, taxi companies would be held liable.²¹⁵

Because they were solely responsible, B&L sought to defer the regulation of their drivers to the authority of the city as a way to gradually remove the company itself from the threat of liability. To do so, B&L attempted to put more onus on the driver. After generating significant debate over the issue, the company was instrumental in the passing of a Municipal Ordinance in 1912, which stated that a taxi "license shall be granted by the Council if they so think fit."²¹⁶ To determine whether or not a driver was fit to operate a taxi, the city began to look less at the amount of training companies like B&L Lawton provided drivers, and more at the driver's actual fitness – both in terms of health and in

²¹⁴ "Additional Taxi Cab Stand in Adderley Street."

²¹⁵ Responding to the Colonial Secretary's intentions to create new rules for motor taxis instead of regulating automobiles under existing laws for horse-drawn carts, Cape Town's law advisor Morgan Evans wrote in protest, "I am still of the opinion... that the application of the ordinary cab regulations *mutatis mutandis* to motor cabs would cause needless doubts and difficulties and would not sufficiently protect the public safety." Morgan Evans, "Report of Mr Advocate Morgan Evans Additional Law Adviser," (Cape Town: National Archives of South Africa (NASA), 1908).

²¹⁶ City of Cape Town, "Regulation Re Tariff of Charges for Hire of Taxi Cabs from Any Authorised Stand within the City," *Provincial Gazette* 1916.

terms of moral conduct. It was at this moment that the drivers' criminal record became the crucial determinant for earning a license. By at least 1912 then, a driver needed to submit a police report in addition to letters of recommendation from their employer to renew their taxi driving license. What is interesting about this is that at the same moment that criminality was beginning to be considered in applications for taxi licenses, South Africa's cities were only just beginning to regulate driving speeds and other rules of the road. Thus, when drivers were arrested for causing accidents for speeding, there was little precedence for how to try these drivers. So the police had to defer to the 1886 law and prove that the driver was not a criminal because he was speeding, but because he was negligent.²¹⁷ In this time period, we see a number of cases in the archives exposing the personal lives of drivers as they attempt to prove their innocence. The archive did not explain how many of these cases actually occurred, I want to take some time to share one case which was meticulously tracked by legislators and the press.

South Africa's Earliest Taxi Drivers

In general, taxicabs were received very well by the public.²¹⁸ In January 1910, on the eve of the Union, the taxicab had successfully been marketed to a vibrant middle-class tourist industry. Transportation literally sat at the center of Cape Town tourism in 1910.²¹⁹ The archives illuminated very little about the composition of the people who

²¹⁷ Hon. C.R. De Villiers & Esquire Ag. Asst. Resident Magistrate, "Rex Versus 1. Lizzie Manielle, Female, Barmaid, Age 22 Yrs, Russia. 2. William Craigen, Male, Age 35, Scotland.," ed. Ordinary Jurisdiction (Cape Town: National Archives of South Africa (NASA), 1911).

²¹⁸ "City of Cape Town to Proprietors of Cabs, Carriages, Motor Cars," *Cape Times*, June 13 1912.

²¹⁹ "Additional Taxi Cab Stand in Adderley Street."

came, but when tourists from other parts of the colony visited the city, they were greeted by the Visitor's Bureau at the railway station. Before taxicabs were introduced, the horse-drawn ordinary cabs waited for visitors to disembark and take them through the city. After the taxicab experiment, the taxicabs stood beside the horse-drawn cabs. B&L fought hard for their taxis to stand by horse-drawn carriages, for example. Initially, the City would only allow motor taxis to operate in off-peak times. The company wrote, "we note that since representations have been made to your Council, it has been suggested that a new taxi cab stand be appointed for use on Sundays, and in close proximity to the present one... As you are aware," the company continued, "there is practically no traffic at this point on Sundays so that we think our suggestion would be suitable to all concerned."²²⁰

These cabs were such a sight that the Cape Times made sure to publish the schedules of their departures during the summer months. So, while railroads brought visitors into the city, cabs, taxis, and trams would shuttle visitors through the city to enjoy the sights. Visitors might have been surprised to see that the city roads in Cape Town differed very little from country roads. Where pedestrians went, so did horses, carts, trams, and they were often going in the same direction on the same roads as pedestrians. So new visitors to Cape Town were confronted by a rather chaotic and dangerous street life, as well as new forms of industrial transport that were not restricted to running on rail lines. Due to the speed and unpredictability of cars, and the relative newness of taxicabs, accidents were bound to occur.²²¹

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ "Tram Passenger's Mishap," *Cape Times*, January 5 1910; "A Street Accident," *Cape Times*, January 5 1910; For statistics for accidents in the metropole, see "Road Accidents

On the 29th of October in 1911, the 25 year old Scottish immigrant and taxi driver William Craigen was arrested for running over Gilbert Maltravers while he was walking along Victoria Road.²²² As a result, the Council immediately revoked Craigen's license and it took almost three years for Craigen to prove worthy enough to have his license reinstated.²²³ The details of the accident and the process through which he was able to accomplish the rare feat of having his license reinstated tells us a lot about the effects that shifting liability from the taxi company to the driver had on those who wanted to enter the profession in the early 20th century. The process also illuminated the reception of the expansion this new motorized form of public transport in city government, society, new city economies, and the law in relation to previous modes of transport.

Because of the relative paucity of taxicabs at the time, Craigen's accident caused quite a scene. When onlookers went to the vehicle to check whether or not Maltravers was hurt, they noticed not Craigen behind the wheel, but found Lizzie Manielle behind the wheel.²²⁴ Court records noted that Manielle was a 22-year-old bartender who immigrated from Russia. Manielle seemed to be accompanied by 3 other women of the same age, who had all been drinking. After the policeman asked what had occurred in the accident, Manielle was "very abusive and used filthy and obscene language" with the

in Great Britain 1990: The Casualty Report," ed. Department of Transport, Scottish Development Office, and Welsh Office (London: HMSO, 1990).

²²² Magistrate, "Rex Versus 1. Lizzie Manielle, Female, Barmaid, Age 22 Yrs, Russia. 2. William Craigen, Male, Age 35, Scotland.."; "Motor Mishap Sequel," *Cape Times*, November 7 1911.

²²³ "Correspondence Re Cancellation of License-Taxi Cab Driver William Craigen."

²²⁴ Inspector, "Negligent Driving by William Craigen, Licensed Driver of Taxi Cab No. 59."; Magistrate, "Rex Versus 1. Lizzie Manielle, Female, Barmaid, Age 22 Yrs, Russia. 2. William Craigen, Male, Age 35, Scotland.."; "Motor Mishap Sequel."

officer.²²⁵ When Craigen was taken to court, his driving was not only scrutinized, but his personal life was as well.²²⁶ The questions that seemed to permeate the court were: Why was this married man letting a drunk women drive his taxicab with three of her friends; and how could the man be so irresponsible as to injure a law-abiding citizen.²²⁷ In his defense, Craigen argued that he was a very experienced driver with three years' experience, who had only let Manielle drive the car outside of the city limits. Craigen also charged that he had given Manielle three driving lessons and attested that she was a very good driver, so she could not have been negligent. Craigen also admitted that Manielle may have had a little drink, but that he was mostly sober and had complete control of the car from the passenger's seat just in case something went wrong. Craigen then pleaded with the court that if anyone should be charged, he should, and to "quote leave the lady out. I am responsible for the car."²²⁸ Despite the argument that Craigen should have been able to prevent the accident, but that he couldn't because the car malfunction and prevented him from taking the wheel in time, the judge charged both Lizzie Manielle and William Craigen with negligence, fining them 10 pounds each. When the Cape Times reported the event the day after the trial, the paper noted, "The Magistrate said that Craigen had no right to allow Maneille to take the wheel. He did not know how his license would stand, but he hoped that it would be withdrawn."²²⁹ More importantly, the Magistrate said, "It was men like the accused who did such a great deal

²²⁵ "Rex Versus 1. Lizzie Manielle, Female, Barmaid, Age 22 Yrs, Russia. 2. William Craigen, Male, Age 35, Scotland."; "Motor Mishap Sequel."

²²⁶ "Correspondence Re Cancellation of License-Taxi Cab Driver William Craigen."

²²⁷ "Rex Versus 1. Lizzie Manielle, Female, Barmaid, Age 22 Yrs, Russia. 2. William Craigen, Male, Age 35, Scotland."; "Motor Mishap Sequel."

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ "Motor Mishap Sequel."

of harm to motoring. The magistrate said that the female accused was largely responsible for [being in] the man's position."²³⁰

Two years later, Craigen wrote to the City Council to ask that his taxi driving license could be reinstated.²³¹ He reminded the Council that his license had been cancelled because of the accident, but that he had since demonstrated competence in driving. Craigen wrote that under suspension, he had worked at the esteemed parking garage, E.J. Lawton as a mechanic, receiving rave reviews for his work.²³² Although he was gainfully employed, Craigen felt that the salary he was making was not enough to support his wife and children. Along with his letter, Craigen included letters from his employer, the Royal Automobile Club of South Africa, the South African Motor Mechanics & Driver Association, as well as from the Police department, and each body recommended that his license be reinstated.²³³ It was only after communicating with the police that Craigen's license was eventually reinstated. He had actually applied a year after the accident, but he was denied on account that drunkenness remained on his record.²³⁴

Craigen's case is representative of a shift in the early taxi industry that was occurring between 1908 and 1916. Over this period the main taxi entrepreneurs were attempting to figure out how to generate profits from employing taxi drivers and at the

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ "Correspondence Re Cancellation of License-Taxi Cab Driver William Craigen."

²³² William Craigen, "Letter from William Craigen to the Town Clerk," (Cape Town: National Archives of South Africa (NASA), 1913).

²³³ South African Motor Mechanics' & Drivers' Association, "In Re the Cancellation of Mr W. Craigen's License," (Cape Town: National Archives of South Africa (NASA), 1913).

²³⁴ "Correspondence Re Cancellation of License-Taxi Cab Driver William Craigen."

same time shifting liability from their business to the driver. Companies like Benjamin & Lawton did this by working with the state to set up a legal infrastructure that made the city council and the police department solely responsible for the distribution and renewal of taxi licenses.²³⁵ For the majority of this period, taxi regulations were often conflated with that of ordinary horse-drawn cabs. By 1916, the City Council finally resolved the question of how to standardize taxi regulations by setting standard fares and rules for licensure.²³⁶ But the process of standardizing taxis went hand in hand with creating an archive on the personal lives of taxi drivers and scrutinizing their records when handing out or renewing licenses. By 1916, taxi entrepreneurs were successful in using directing attention away from their business interests and towards the proclivities of the human condition.

Conclusion

By 1908, the railroad moved the most people throughout South Africa. It transported migrant workers to the mines and the middle-class from port city to port city. The railroad also generated the most profits. Every week, Cape Town's major newspapers reported the earnings of railroad companies in the country and also contrasted these earnings against railroad companies in Europe and the United States. What was also striking in these newspapers were the number of accidents that seemed to occur around railroads. Migrant workers, especially, made headlines when their bodies were found bisected by railroad tracks by the mines. Cape Town's middle-class also feared for their

²³⁵ "Additional Taxi Cab Stand in Adderley Street."

²³⁶ "Cape Town Municipality. Regulations for Tariff of Charges for Hire of Taxi Cabs," (Cape Town: National Archives of South Africa (NASA), 1908-1916).

safety. In January of 1910, scores of concerned citizens in Cape Town wrote letters to the editor of the Cape Times urging the city to fix broken platforms, to set speed limits, and to update signage so that professionals traveling from the suburbs to the city could do so safely. Trams posed similar threats to the public's safety. Although there were fewer letters to the editor complaining about them, trams too made headlines when pedestrians and commuters were rushed to the hospital after being run over. The fact that these forms of heavy rail were claiming lives sent the message that travel was dangerous. It was no consequence that stories about commuter travel appeared in Cape Town's January newspapers. January was the height of vacation travel to Cape Town. But even though trains and trams were so dangerous, the companies that ran these forms of transport were rarely liable for the deaths and injuries. When accidents occurred, the pedestrian was blamed for being incompetent--for crossing the rails when a train or tram was coming, or for stumbling and getting caught on the rails, etc. Thus, Hackney Carriages and Cabs Act never applied to forms of heavy rail. Generally, carriages, carts, bicycles, the motor car, and eventually taxicabs could only be held criminally negligent and charged and tried for injuring pedestrians. It was within this context and legal environment that taxi needed to negotiate when entrepreneurs sought to create business models based on the taxi.

In thinking about what this early history means for understanding the genealogy of taxis, I want to end with two points. The first is that one cannot understand taxis in Cape Town without recognizing the taxi as a hyperextension of the human. Taxis have and can be seen as threatening precisely because they have agency – or better yet, personality. In the more contemporary history of taxis in South Africa, this agency has fluctuated from being revolutionary to that of being criminal. But in each moment, the

taxi is associated directly with some sort of meaningful human action. This action, I think, has its roots in how taxis needed to be constructed to divert attention away from more capital-intensive railway systems, which would become the measure against which the J. C. Le Roux Commission would propose and get passed its Motor Carrier Transportation Act in 1930. My second point is that it was not simply in the 1980s and the 1990s that the taxi became humanized in the black taxi press. In fact, I would argue that in the latter part of the 20th century, the taxi became a particular type of raced, gendered human--"the black man." In the early 20th century, claiming a sort of taxi humanity was a strategy of a particularly elite to attempt to build and sustain a taxi business. Today, it has been used by SANTACO as a way to justify a revolutionary business model, which calls upon the struggle that many South Africans endured to end apartheid. I think that it was this particular relationship between the taxi-as-human and capitalism that made taxis both revolutionary in the 1970s, warlords in the 1990s, and the taxi subject that is being debated over today.

I have attempted to think through these questions as I reviewed materials that I collected last summer from the Western Cape Archives and Records, as well as in my readings of *The Cape Times* and *The Cape Argus* from 1908 to 1916. Not initially seeing the relationship to crime and identity politics, I attempted to use applications for taxi licenses and trials against taxi drivers who injured pedestrians as a way to locate when taxis first appeared on the transportation landscape, in the public sphere, in governance, and in the making of social (class and race) differences in Cape Town. What I learned was that there was actually something about taxis as a particular mode of transport both conflated with horse-drawn carriages in business structure and distinct from railways in

that opened up the possibility for white, heterosexual, respectable male personhood to connect motor-taxis more legibly to more recognizable transport in turn of the century Cape Town. As I tried to convey in my abstract to this presentation, the period between 1908 and 1916 was a moment in South Africa where the laws against taxi drivers who injured people were few, but they were very strict. Taxi drivers who injured pedestrians were charged under a law from 1886, which was originally meant for horse-drawn carriages. The law stated that a driver could be charged and tried for the pedestrian's injury if he was "wrongfully" and "unlawfully negligent." Thus, in all of the trials that I found, the prosecution attempted to prove somehow that the taxi driver was a danger to the public's well being. As this law continued to be extrapolated from carriages to taxis, Cape Town was also trying to think through how to incorporate taxicabs into an already very diverse transportation system.

CHAPTER THREE: Apartheid, Forced Removals, and Public Transportation in Cape Town, 1948-1978

Introduction

In 1988, the organization Hands Off District Six (HODS) convened dispossessed and displaced South Africans to contest proposed plans to turn a seemingly barren strip of land, just down the slope of Cape Town's Devil's Peak mountain, into a brand-new neighborhood with some of the best urban amenities. In collaboration with researchers from the University of Cape Town (UCT), HODS helped compile oral histories, photographs, and other primary sources to help recreate the world that the barren land represented for hundreds of families that had once called the land "District Six," before Cape Town, under orders from the National Party, bulldozed District Sixers' homes in 1977. As part of the project, HODS asked Gadija Jacobs to recall what it felt like to be forcibly relocated in the aftermath. Jacobs replied, and I quote her at length:

Oooo, don't talk about that, please don't talk about it to me. I will cry. I will cry all over again. There's when the trouble started... When they chucked us out of Cape Town. My whole life came *changed*! There was a change. Not just in me, in all. The people. What they. Took away they can never give back to us! Even if they give it back we won't take it. It won't never be the same again. (Weeping) It *cannot* be the same. The trust we had in those people, and they broke their trust! (Weeping) Oh I want to cry so much, all over again... I cannot explain how it was when I moved out of Cape Town and I came to Manenberg... Oooo my God, was my whole life tumbling down...! I couldn't see my life in this raw township! You know, far away from family. All the neighbours were strangers. That was the hardest part of my life, believe me... They destroyed us, they made our children ruffians.²³⁷

²³⁷ Shamil Jeppie, Crain Soudien, and Hands Off District Six Committee, eds., *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present* (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1990), 30-31.

Jacobs heart wrenching testimony underscore Deborah M. Hart's characterization of the District Six as intangibly profound; "its toll upon individual lives and emotions is immeasurable," she explained.²³⁸ What can be gathered from the apartheid history of transport leading up to the beginning of Cape Town's 1966 10-year plan to relocate some 40,000 residents from the slopes of Devil's Peak to the ghettos of the Cape Flats, however, is that the neighborhood's razing was part of a wider strategy to turn black South Africans into commuters and shore up white South Africans' stronghold in the most convenient city neighborhoods as residents.

While the previous chapter ended at the onset of South Africa's apartheid regime, this chapter begins with the NP's election win on a platform of racial segregation and continuing post-war economic growth, and culminating with fierce protests against forced removals, which erupted in the Soweto Uprising hundreds of miles away in Cape Town – an event fundamentally radicalized the character of the African National Congress in ghettos and amongst young people, the 1948-1976 period witnessed South Africa's cities like Cape Town struggling and oftentimes succeeding in effecting segregationist plans in the country's densest areas. Nowhere was this clearer than in Cape Town when the apartheid regime began in 1948, but particularly when the city forcibly implemented the apartheid state's Group Areas Act to segregate its neighborhoods and began razing District Six over a decade, beginning in late 1960s. While black South Africans oftentimes refused to be dispossessed and displaced, protesters' short-term loss in the razing of District Six was only part of the enduring.

²³⁸ Deborah M. Hart, "Political Manipulation of Urban Space: The Razing of District Six, Cape Town," in *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present*, ed. Shamil Jeppie and Crain Soudien (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1990), 128.

To understand how taxis emerged slowly from the 1930s to the 1970s, and then booming after the nationwide politicization of transport as late as 1976 Soweto Uprising and into the 1980s, where taxis faced debates about whether or not to slow taxi growth, it is important to see how South Africa's whitest city used transportation to build out routes, on which taxi drivers would eventually ply to make Cape Town the city it is today.

In the previous chapter we saw transport options diversify as well as the composition of public transport users change over time. Building on Chapter 2's contention that each transport act was complicit in the dispossession and displacement of black South Africans, both before and during the apartheid era, this chapter explains how South Africa's apartheid regime increasingly used road construction and transport provisioning to turn black commuters into moving pawns of the regime's segregationist, social engineering project. The strengths of trains as a form of travel was that they were heavily subsidized by the state, and it was cheaper for passengers to travel greater distances. The weaknesses of trains were that they were more difficult to get to than buses. Most often train stations were rather far from where people lived. Because of this we see passenger travel by railroad plateau in its growth between 1960-1978 (Figure 3.1). While buses could take passengers further than their feet could, buses were poorly constructed. The strengths of the original taxis were that they were very much like buses - they traveled between townships and town in a moment that saw fewer resources for black neighborhoods. The weaknesses of the original taxis were that they never had the backing of state subsidies. While the state used LRTBs to license drivers around the country, most of the taxes generated went to road construction, not to making driving or

buying taxis more affordable. The strengths of walking are that it's free if you're able-bodied, and walkers are free from the types of security and surveillance on buses and trains. In many ways, walking provided the most autonomous travel for commuters. The weaknesses of walking were that walkers in very great numbers could never slow the growth of roads, on which passenger cars and commercial vehicles were traveling more and more, making walking increasingly dangerous for commute. Moreover, walking would continue to become more and more difficult as shantytowns were moved further and further away from the city center.

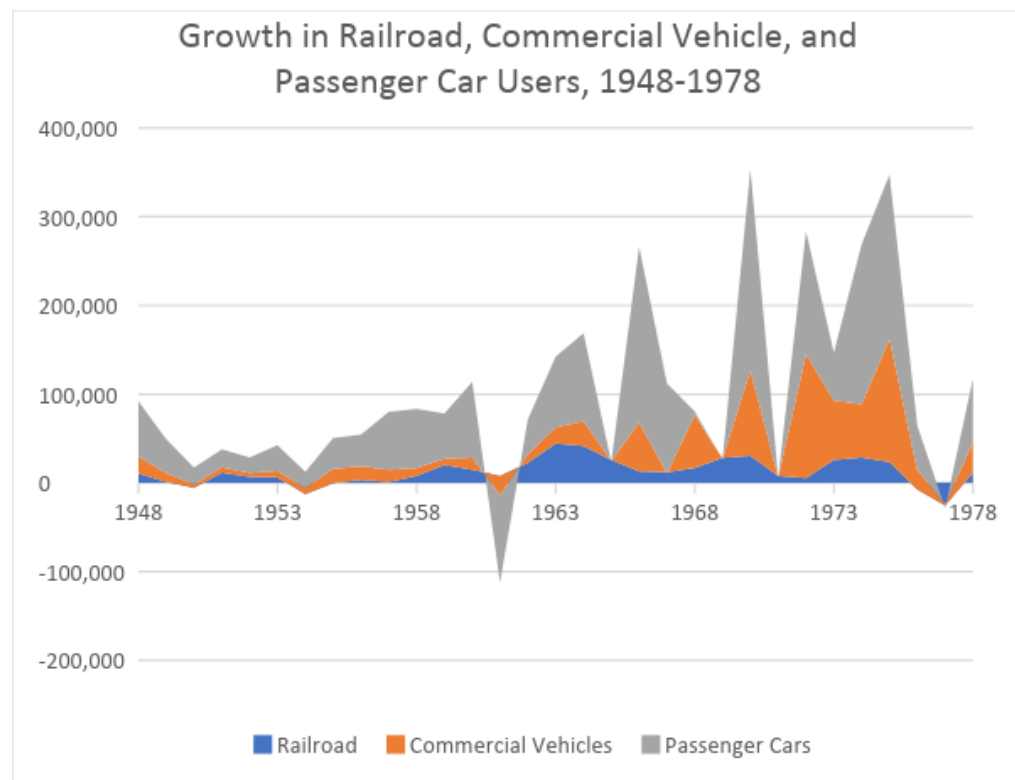


Figure 3.1 Railroad, Commercial Vehicle, and Passenger Car Growth, 1948-1978

Applying Michel Foucault's "Discipline" to Transportation in Cape Town

Despite several inconsequential amendments to the 1930 Act, including motor taxis' formal 1941 inclusion, McCaul explained, "the principles underlying the regulation and control of transportation remained unchanged" throughout the two middle quarters of the 20th century.²³⁹ While Le Roux's Motor Transportation Act of 1930 inquired into the competition between motor-cars and railways decades prior, the NTC commissioned Alex van Breda in 1977 to inquire into buses' competitors. By this time both bus and taxi use were beginning to see exponential growth.²⁴⁰ Bus companies under the protection of South African Transport Services (SATS), however, were worried taxi drivers, who were predominantly black and servicing ghettos by this time, would take their business.²⁴¹ So, the Road Transportation Act of 1977 (the 1977 Act) more clearly defined what vehicles counted as buses in order to restrict the numbers of passengers black "bus" drivers could carry and legitimize private and SATS-backed buses as the commercial road vehicle with access to the largest numbers of commuters. Finding the nascent taxi industry as not much of a threat and ignoring the growing radical resistance movements to buses specifically and black poverty more broadly, the 1977 Act that the Van Breda

²³⁹ McCaul, 36.

²⁴⁰ At the very same time, commercial (buses and taxis) and passenger (private car) vehicle production witnessed its lowest numbers of the decade in 1977. After 1977, however, road vehicle manufacturing and use of all types saw exponential growth that was even greater than it had seen the decade prior. In every case, however, private car use and manufacturing outpaced public transport's at every point since 1930, even though private car drivers were primarily white and commuters primarily black. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Africa, Asia & Oceania, 1750-2000*. [Line graphs from Mitchell to be included in final draft.]

²⁴¹ Khosa, "Capital Accumulation, the Apartheid State and the Rise of the Black Taxi Industry in Johannesburg and Soweto, 1930-1990." Railways, too, remained complicit in apartheid's segregationist project. Pirie, "Rolling Segregation into Apartheid: South African Railways, 1948-53."

Commission came up with a law that went to great lengths to define buses. The 1977 Act did not do the same for taxis, however. “[The 1977 Act] defined a ‘bus’ as a motor vehicle designed or adapted for the conveyance of more than nine persons (including the driver),”²⁴² McCaul concluded in her analysis of the Act. “Taxis, therefore, could operate legally as eight-passenger vehicles.”²⁴³ And stuffing eight passengers into their sedans that fit only six black taxi drivers did. Moreover, as the Group Areas Act of 1950 moved black neighborhoods further and further from city centers, and as forced removals “reached their most concentrated and colossal form between the early 1960s and mid-1970s,” the demand for more capacious commercial vehicles also grew.²⁴⁴ What Van Breda’s Commission did not anticipate, however, was the extent to which the political tide would turn in 1976, when young black South Africans abandoned their parents’ well-worn strategy of demonstrating peacefully to protest bus fare hikes and began burning SATS buses to the ground in the momentous Soweto Uprising.²⁴⁵ The uprising, notably, occurred around the same time Datsun Nissan starting building commercial road minibus vehicles, which could carry ten passengers, and more comfortably and legally carry the eight passengers the 1977 Act allowed before being considered a bus.

As opposed to the growing desires for black capitalisms which taxis would solidify later in the 20th century, apartheid urban planning used public transportation to confine South Africans whose identity documents read “Black” to neighborhoods the Group Areas Act created for them. Moreover, trains and buses that moved between those

²⁴² McCaul, 36.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Bundy, “Land, Law and Power: Forced Removals in Historical Context,” 8.

²⁴⁵ See photographic archive in Pohlandt-McCormick.

neighborhoods were themselves segregated. Paradoxically, apartheid needed public transport to keep black South Africans moving between their homes and workplaces in order to sustain the economy. Like a well-oiled machine, buses and trains, and later minibus taxis, brought domestic workers, carpenters, cooks, construction workers, custodians, dish washers, and other service people to the central business district early in the morning. When the workday was through, those same vehicles brought workers back home to their segregated neighborhoods at night. Day after day, thousands of people moved around Cape Town in their segregated vehicles: on first- or third-class train cars; or, on minibus taxis. One's daily commute in poor conditions was a constant reminder that the government deemed you as inferior, if you were black. The converse feeling of superiority might be fleeting for white professionals in their private vehicles, but they were certainly there. This chapter shows how one racist government used public transportation to segregate people, and also shape the identities of the country's citizens and its cities.

My work presents an almost uncanny case study for the conceptualizations of discipline and power in the work of Michel Foucault, whose theoretical ideas underpin my argument about public transportation. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Foucault argued that rich and powerful groups in the modern world have created political and social institutions to maintain their power by oppressing, exploiting, and “disciplining” subordinate subjects.

Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience) ... It dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns [the body] into an “aptitude,” a “capacity,” which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. If economic exploitation separates the force and the product of labor,

let us say that disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination.²⁴⁶

Here Foucault explains how disciplining institutions transform human bodies into machines based on the aptitudes and skills they acquire through repetition. Foucault calls these subjects “docile bodies.”²⁴⁷ For instance, a worker living in a sprawling, segregated city might spend a significant portion of their day on the subway. If that person pays close attention to the schedule and memorizes the times when trains arrive and depart from the station, that person might very well be early to work every day. Their aptitude in navigating the system of public transportation allows that person to garner the respect from their supervisors. Yet, while the commuter climbs the social ladder at work, their labor (exerted in the long commute to and at work) is inherently being subordinated by the economy and their bosses. Essentially, the commuter highlighted in this example is being exploited by capitalism, a system which only rewards a person when they can demonstrate superiority in a job that requires multitasking. But this only happens because the powerful have forcefully and effectively regimented a person’s everyday behavior: traveling to work. Worse yet, as my example illustrates, the genius of the modern state and the regimes of capitalism is that something as benign as memorizing a train schedule works to naturalize the relations between commuting and work so effectively, that workers internalize capitalist regimes and police themselves. This is precisely the

²⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd Vintage Books ed., Discipline & Punish (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 138.

²⁴⁷ Indeed, these “subjects” aren’t subjects at all. Rather, they are objects. However, I use the word “subjects” in the body to insist on the humanity of commuters.

quintessence of modern subject formation, as well as how capitalist transport regimes subject agency.²⁴⁸

Similarly, apartheid passed laws to make everyday life in the segregated city's built environment a disciplining institution. South Africa used the Group Areas Act to confine and subordinate black and brown people, all members of the working-class, to its rule. Historians in the 1970s and 1980s made great inroads into interrogating apartheid legislation to substantiate this claim. Together, they observed that the containment of black South Africans, in particular, to rural homelands and urban townships allowed the government to establish an everlasting precedent of white supremacy across rural and urban Southern African space. However, no place saw segregation and the exclusion of black participation in social life of a city as did Cape Town, which is why Cape Town figures so prominently in the ways transport dispossessed and displaced black urban-dwellers. Richard Humphries argued that the Western Cape's history of forced removals and its Coloured Labour Preference Policy "has long been viewed as an attempt at maintaining an area of South Africa where Africans would not outnumber whites, and which could be a last-resort white homeland in a radical participation of the country."²⁴⁹ It was therefore necessary for the white minority to find a way to sustain white supremacy in the city's built environment in order to preemptively disenfranchise the

²⁴⁸ Modern, colonial archival knowledge regimes do the same work of turning subjects into objects, particularly in the Global South. For the South African case, see Lalu.

²⁴⁹ Richard Humphries, "Administrative Politics and the Coloured Labour Preference Policy During the 1960s," in *The Angry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape*, ed. Wilmot Godfrey James and Mary Simons (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989), 172.

country's majority populations. Cape Town's history of public transport was one way to achieve that.

Apartheid was not all powerful in its attempts to segregate people and use transportation to do so, and the struggles between apartheid ideals and urban planning on the ground is proof. Infrastructural changes could not always settle specific tensions that emerged between groups of people, and between municipal and national spheres of the South African government. Additionally, the chapter provides the context for the erosion of public transportation along hardening racial lines in the period from 1948-1970. Together, Chapters 2 and 3 investigate the ability for public transport in Cape Town to be developed to marginalize dissenting racial and political groups in times of ideological and political change. While the previous chapter showed how Cape Town was relatively successful in planning public transportation to confine people, this chapter shows transport hegemony unfolding as national laws sought to dictate local historical contingencies. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed the intensification of apartheid's nationwide social engineering projects. This chapter reviews the laws that made Cape Town the apartheid city it remains as being today. Giving significant focus to the Group Areas Act of 1950, the chapter ends with the forced removals of the South Africans living in District Six in 1966 to underscore the origins of the minibus taxi revolution in the midst of some of the most violent forced removals the world has ever seen. How what became the black taxi revolution emerged out of but also despite this context is the theme the next chapter explores.

Apartheid Cape Town

To apartheid's founders, the concept of multiple culturally and linguistically defined groups was far less appealing than that of four specific races: Black African, Coloured, Indian/Asian, and White. Apartheid was made manifest in the creation of disparate, separate facilities – including the access to healthcare, jobs, and water – by race, and it was observable in the urban planning of Cape Town almost immediately after 1948, when the white National Party came into power in South Africa. In 1950, the National Party passed the Group Areas Act, which, when it was amended in 1966, resulted in the forced removals and economic disenfranchisement of black people from places that were traditionally racially mixed. Under the Group Areas Act, older, integrated, urban neighborhoods were declared to be whites-only spaces because apartheid city planners decided that these areas were commercially valuable and, thus, better for white use (Figure 2.1).²⁵⁰

The separate areas that resulted from the Group Areas Act sought to design and implement once and for all had been defined over a longer period of time through a series of state laws from the mid- to late-20th century.²⁵¹ To the chagrin of Cape Town's local government, new national laws took precedence over municipal and provincial urban planning preferences. These same laws not only demonstrated the tensions between the

²⁵⁰ See the topographic map of the Cape Town landscape, which ranges from “mountain terrain,” to “gentler, cultivable slopes,” to “sand dunes and marshy hollows.” When juxtaposed with Figure 3.1, we see that whites continue to live in the more luxurious areas around Table Mountain and the Tygerberg Mountain chain, and also the Atlantic Ocean, and Hout and Table Bays. Townships for people categorized as black or Coloured were generally in the Cape Flats, which, as we can see, was described as uncultivable. Western, 97.

²⁵¹ For a description of apartheid laws that is more comprehensive than the one I describe in this chapter, see Omond.

state and municipal authorities, but they also impinged on the public and private lives of South African citizens. Neighborhoods and commercial districts were created along the lines of race, and people struggled to organize their lives accordingly or risked governmental backlash. The top-down control of the state and the actors of the white apartheid government, however, were challenged by the populations of people designated as black and Coloured. The influx of nonwhite people into the major cities following World War II especially posed what the white middle-classes viewed as a “threat” to the burgeoning apartheid government and its white constituents. Panicked because of their racial minority status, apartheid state leaders aggressively passed laws to curb and control the growing black, Coloured, and Indian/Asian populations in South Africa’s cities. Under apartheid, the white elite enacted racist laws quickly and effectively. However, the influence of these laws was contested by political activists from all racial and ethnic backgrounds, along with their allies in local governing bodies. Their resistance weakened the system of apartheid because the system could not function without everyone’s compliance.

The National Party garnered the necessary votes to win the 1948 election in South Africa on a platform of white supremacy. The election of the National Party occurred in the context of South Africa’s involvement in World War II. Ironically, its involvement drastically changed the racial makeup of South Africa’s cities, perhaps even more than the abolition of slavery had done a century prior. Urban-dwelling, working-class people classified as white and Coloured were drafted into the army and sent abroad to fight on the side of the Allied powers while black South Africans on the home front were left with

a wider assortment of employment opportunities than ever before.²⁵² Men living in rural labor reserves like the Transkei in the Eastern Cape took trains as far as the Western Cape to claim these job openings. What resulted was an enormous population influx of people of color in Cape Town and other cities, but, especially, a rapidly increasing black population in the Western Cape, where *de facto* preference for mixed-race workers had prevailed for centuries to keep them out.²⁵³

Members of the National Party, Afrikaner intellectuals and scholars at the University of Stellenbosch, and the white elite in Cape Town were appalled by the changing demographics in the province. The elite retaliated against what they saw as the looming and ominous consequences of such population influx by enacting a variety of national laws. These laws were markedly racist, and reflective of the ideological backings of apartheid. Translating and paraphrasing the 1953 scholarship of N. J. J. Olivier, a Stellenbosch academic, Richard Humphries explained how the Western Cape adopted a policy of forced removals to ensure the population influx was impermanent.

[Firstly,] no further permanent settlement should be allowed, especially of families and wives of men already in the region; secondly, the number of Africans employed should be gradually reduced, even eliminated in certain categories of employment (domestic servants, etc); and thirdly, where African labour was required, it should take the form of migrant labour.²⁵⁴

²⁵² Humphries.

²⁵³ The best example of the earliest settlers employing indigenous Southern African labor on the Cape is Eva. While Eva would not have been Coloured, since the category didn't exist in the 17th century, her descendants would be classified as such. Perhaps it was Eva's experience that helped shape the myth undergirding the eventual Coloured Labour Preference Policy in 1960. See Julia C. Wells, "Eva's Men: Gender and Power in the Establishment of the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-74," *Journal of African History* 39 (1998).

²⁵⁴ Humphries, 172.

The influx of black people in the Western Cape struck a nerve within white elite circles. Not only did they see the demographics of “their” province changing, but urban areas were becoming even more overcrowded than they had been in the past. Informal settlements posed a greater problem for the Cape Town City Council because growing shantytowns made enforcing the Urban Areas and Slums Act difficult. At the same time, however, workers residing in slums were sustaining the thriving war economy at a very low short-term cost, except for more long-term social and political control, to the wartime economy and urban governance. The influx of migrant laborers and the unwillingness of the white elite to make more reasonable spaces for black South Africans to live caused conditions in the city to worsen over the course of World War II, and set an employment precedent in the post-war era. Indeed, “the number of Africans employed in industry and manufacturing had steadily risen,” Humphries explained. “More important, perhaps, than the increase in employment levels,” Humphries added, “was the gradual diversification of the sectors within which Africans found employment.”²⁵⁵ This led the Cape Town City Council, with the support of the white elite, to ratify a Coloured Labour Preference Policy in 1960 to officially dissuade employers from hiring workers classified as black. While the policy was officially abandoned in 1984, in the waning years of apartheid, the law set a racial, demographic precedent in Cape Town, setting the scene for a post-war marginalization of blacks in poverty and social isolation, and telling mixed-race South Africans that the Province valued their lives over others.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 171.

²⁵⁶ Omond, 95-101.

The Cape Town City Council and many other municipal governing bodies in South Africa's cities fine-tuned the apartheid ethos of the National Party to address specific issues of racial segregation and population influx control. Both the attitudes of the local and national governments informed each other in a way that allowed them to achieve their joint goals of white supremacy. The successful implementation of racial segregation made the increases in black populations less visible, especially by containing their residences in townships a long walk away from the central business district. Moreover, regulating black people's access to the CBD helped maintain "the city's" character as white. The ratification of the Group Areas Act in 1950 was the single, most influential law to consummate the relationship between the National Party and various city councils in South Africa because it directly addressed the grievances of the urban white elite. Apartheid made the law seem necessary because apportioning every "group" to their respective "areas" was the very foundation of apartness.

The Group Areas Act mandated that state and urban planners draw up the country and its cities into areas where different groups of people would be forced to live.²⁵⁷ Combined with the Population Registration Act, passed in the same year, state and urban planners declared that the most valuable areas (rural and urban) in South Africa should be in the possession of the white minority. The black majority in the country was confined to segregated settlements that included homelands (read "rural labor reserves") and

²⁵⁷ The Group Areas Act was, of course, preceded by the Natives Land Act of 1913, which dispossessed Africans of hard-earned farmland, causing undue hardship for black landowners. This was also the impetus for the formation of the South African Native National Congress, which became the African National Congress (ANC), South Africa's current executive party. See Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*; Charles Van Onselen, *The Seed Is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper 1894-1985* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996).

townships (read “urban labor reserves”). The South African Police forcibly removed people of color to the places that the map of the Group Areas Act had assigned. The South African Police (SAP), tasked with the implementation of these policies, moved blacks to black areas, Coloureds to Coloured areas, and Indians and Asians to Indian/Asian areas. Like in the case of the suburbanization of Cape Town and the United States, these group areas had to be constructed around the existing lines of public transport or new routes and vehicles needed to be created to facilitate their travel to the CBD. Residential areas and public transport became even more intertwined during the planning of apartheid through the Group Areas Act. Indeed, the Group Areas Act illuminates the great extent to which the power and interests of South Africa’s cities and the apartheid state and their economic and segregationist interests were inextricably linked.

Getting cities and the state to work together posed challenges. The Durban City Council’s Technical Subcommittee, a city-planning governing body in Durban (a large city on the east coast of the country), for example, went through a lengthy process of implementing the Group Areas Act in its municipality. In 1951, the committee published its first report, which highlighted how its city and others should bring about the ideals of the Group Areas Act. Points one and three were:

1. A residential zone should:
 - a. have boundaries which should as far as possible constitute barriers of a kind preventing or discouraging contact between races in neighbouring residential zones;
 - b. have direct access to working areas and to such amenities as are used by all races, so that its residents do not have to traverse the residential areas of another race, or do so only by rail or by way of a common highway segregated from the residential areas abutting it...;
 - e. be so sited that means of transport most suitable for the group concerned is or can be made available...

3. In order to give the maximum length of common boundary between working areas and residential zone, and thus reduce transport costs and difficulties, dispersal of industry in ribbon formation where practicable is preferable to the massing of industry in great blocks.²⁵⁸

Western assessed these hypotheses and their implication for the Group Areas Act, public transport, and racial segregation in the following three points:

For transportation, as in principle 1(e), (a) owing to the greater dependence upon the private car in White areas, there is less rail passenger service in these areas; (b) the converse is true in Coloured, Indian, and Black African rail routes. The rail routes, according to principles 1(a) and 1(b), carry the Nonwhite members of the labor force to their places of work without passing near White residential areas; and, whenever possible, rail lines and roads run the length of bigger strips in order to separate more effectively the different racial and ethnic zones. (c) Within the industrial zones all groups travel the same roads and rail (but in separate capsules – buses and railway coaches are racially segregated), symbolizing the integrative limits of the common economy.²⁵⁹

As Western showed, the theoretical basis of the Group Areas Act did not make the practical implementation of urban planning in South Africa's cities an easy task. Every time cities created an area for a specific group of people, they also needed to create a new line of public transport in order to accommodate the working-class' commute to the central business district. Moreover, since people of color used public transport in greater numbers than their white counterparts by 1950, creating public transport also meant investing resources in communities of color. Segregation, on city council agendas, meant new fiscal responsibilities for urban municipalities. Cities would need to curb the egregious sprawl of neighborhoods of color to cut down on costs too. Cities were also strapped further because working-class people living far away from their places of employment were generally unable to pay the fares required to travel from distant

²⁵⁸ Western, 88.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 93.

townships to the CBD because of low wages that followed the racialized logic of capitalism in South Africa. To lessen working-class expenditures, municipalities and the state subsidized their travel costs.²⁶⁰ But rather than understand subsidies as a benefit for black commuters, “fare subsidies are associated with,” for Meshack Khosa, “the geographical dislocation of Black communities from the centre to the periphery of urban areas,” not simply to save money in their pocketbooks.²⁶¹

Cities also needed to construct railroad lines as structural buffer strips between racially segregated neighborhoods. At the very same time railroad tracks brought the working-class to their places of employment, they blockaded free movement between Group Areas. The goal of separating the races turned into a multifaceted urbanizing program in all South Africa’s cities. The Group Areas Act did not change the way white government officials used other areas of public transport, however. Public transport continued to allow the white elite to build and expand their property along the Simon’s Town railroad and Victoria Road tramways. If anything, public transport inherited more responsibility from the Group Areas Act. It confined people of color by removing them from the city center and assigned them poor housing on the peripheries of town. The railroad tracks and, increasingly, roadways ensured people of color’s confinement remained intact.

You go to bed, you dream about it – and I am not exaggerating at all. I stayed just beyond the railway line, and the railway line in South Africa is very often and most always an indication of the whole thing there, because you know a railway line, or a river, or something like that, is a line of demarcation between Whites on

²⁶⁰ Gordon H Pirie, "Travelling under Apartheid," in *The Apartheid City and Beyond: Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa*, ed. David M. Smith (London, New York, Johannesburg: Routledge, Witwatersrand University Press, 1992), 172.

²⁶¹ Khosa, "Changing Patterns of ‘Black’ Bus Subsidies in the Apartheid City, 1944–1986," 251.

the one hand and Coloureds on the other hand in a very physical sense. In any case, for me it was the railway line, and I see this thing over there all the time.²⁶²

Forced Removals²⁶³

Colin Bundy described the external process of stripping people from their land in 3 stages. First, the powerful wage violent wars to strip the people who had lived there before from their land. Second, the powerful draw dispossessed poor people – most often, peasants – into a cash economy by charging rents to the landless and taxes on people who produce agriculture for a living. Third, the powerful solidify poor, rural, dispossessed people as such by writing laws that make their dispossession seem like the status quo, and protecting the powerful from suffering the same fate. “There was precious little neutral about the Masters and Servants Acts, vagrancy laws, the 1913 Land Act, the Urban Areas Act, the Group Areas Act, or the Prevention of Illegal Squatting,” Bundy wrote.²⁶⁴ “These, and many others, expressed in statute from the asymmetrical property and power relations of a colonial society.” Like transport itself, laws that curbed land and property

²⁶² Interview with Adam Smith (1971), published in *Western*, 84.

²⁶³ Gathering exact numbers of people who were forced in both my research sites (Cape Town and Johannesburg) has confounded researchers since the 1980s. “One cannot know for sure how many Blacks were uprooted by [forced removals],” Leonard Thompson explained. “The number was certainly vast.” Continuing, Thompson explained that non-governmental organizations and research projects have generated some data, but the work of documenting forced removals is still ongoing. “The Surplus People Project, which made a thorough study of the removals, estimated” Thompson summarized, “that 3,548,900 people were removed between 1960 and 1983; 1,720,420 from the towns, 1,129,000 from farms, 614,000 from [black-owned farmland that the state redistributed to white South Africans], and 103,500 from strategic development areas.” This goes to say that half of all forced removals in the 1960s and 1970s were in cities. Thompson, 194. These numbers were replicated in Bundy, “Land, Law and Power: Forced Removals in Historical Context,” 9. However, the original source is the following: Platzky and Walker, 10.

²⁶⁴ Bundy, “Land, Law and Power: Forced Removals in Historical Context,” 4-5.

ownership for black people merely confirmed centuries worth of dispossession and displacement that had already been set in motion by the settler colonial project. Cape Town forcibly removed 32,000 black South Africans between 1960-1983, and that does not include the quarter of a million people who were under threat of removal.²⁶⁵ Urban removals in the Western Cape totaled only 1% of the number of forced removals throughout the country. 10% of the removals were all from the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) area, which included South Africa's megacity Johannesburg.

As early as the turn of the 20th century, suburbanization signaled the increased marginalization of lower-class and working people of color in Cape Town. In 1900, people lived in the city center, in closer Southern Suburbs like Woodstock, Observatory, and Mowbray, or as live-in domestic workers and gardeners in the homes of rich Southern Suburbs families, as well as on the other side of Table Mountain, in affluent neighborhoods like Sea Point.²⁶⁶ As Cape Town's population grew, the reality of city administration reluctance to provide housing for workers began pushing people of color into slums or the backyards of the property-owning white upper-middle-classes. Their confinement as far as the center city was concerned, escalated with the bubonic plague in 1901, and when the great influenza pandemic broke out among the Dock Native Location (where the majority of urban-dwelling black working-class people lived) in 1918.²⁶⁷ Even though the first case of occurred hundreds of miles away in King William's Town, the

²⁶⁵ Platzky and Walker, 11.

²⁶⁶ Western, 39.

²⁶⁷ Bickford-Smith, "A 'Special Tradition of Multi-Racialism?' Segregation in Cape Town in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," 50; Howard Phillips, "Black October: Cape Town and the Spanish Influenza Epidemic," in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, ed. Christopher C. Saunders (Cape Town: University of Cape Town History Department, 1979), 88; Western, 45-46.

ferocity of these diseases incited fear among the white upper-class in the richest suburbs in Cape Town, women and men who had already felt threatened because of the proximity of their neighborhoods to the Dock Native Location, which was the central site of black life. “It was unfortunate that this outbreak occurred [first] in an African community,” Elizabeth van Heyningen explained, “for it confirmed white Capetonians in their belief that Africans, because of their insanitary living conditions, were particularly susceptible to the plague.”²⁶⁸ This was an irrational fear, of course. Life in the Docks Native Location was like a prison, and a temporary one at that. “They were largely recruited on short term contracts from the Transkei,” Saul Dubow explained, “[and] were registered in their own names and the names of their headmen.”²⁶⁹ The black dock workers there lived in closed off quarters and were not as free to move around like many commuters who worked on the docks by day and returned to *de facto* segregated neighborhoods at night. Still, the elite pressured the municipal government to remove blacks from the city center entirely, and create a new district for black workers to live a “safe” distance from white neighborhoods.²⁷⁰ Accordingly, after each epidemic, Cape Town established the first townships for black South Africans: Ndabeni in 1902 and Langa in 1923. Despite being forcibly removed to Ndabeni, Western observed, “some 5,000 to 6,000 remained in the

²⁶⁸ Elizabeth van Heyningen, “Cape Town and the Plague of 1901,” in *Studies in the History of Cape Town: Volume 4*, ed. Christopher Saunders, Howard Phillips, and Elizabeth van Heyningen (Cape Town: History Department, in association with the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1981), 74.

²⁶⁹ Saul Dubow, “African Labour at the Cape Town Docks 1900-1904: Processes of Transition,” *ibid.*, 109.

²⁷⁰ Ironically, removing people from one and repopulating them in another actually exacerbated public health risks. Along with being removed from all sorts of areas throughout the country in the middle of the 20th century, Thompson explained, “Blacks experienced high levels of poverty, undernutrition, and disease, especially tuberculosis,” not to mention challenges to their mental well-being. Thompson, 195.

city,” most likely in informal settlements.²⁷¹ Like these temporary informal areas of settlement, Ndabeni, too, was designed to be impermanent. Langa, on the other hand, was meant to survive, so the city continued to bring Ndabeni residents to Langa until 1936.

Working-class life in Cape Town was not very different for people of color from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Coloured and Indian Capetownians living in neighborhoods like District Six and the Malay Quarter lived in the same kinds of two-bedroom homes that Ndabeni and Langa residents did. But, Ndabeni and Langa were the first totally segregated neighborhoods in Cape Town; both were designated all black. Additionally, many of the people living in Ndabeni and Langa could not afford the train fare to commute to work, so they walked 15 kilometers, which might take nearly two hours.²⁷² To add insult to injury, the country passed the Natives Land Act in 1913, which restricted black South Africans’ ability to own land in reserves and townships like Ndabeni and Langa, to which cities like Cape Town were slowly and violently removing black people. 10 years later, in 1923, the country passed the Native Urban Areas Act (the same year Langa was established) to prohibit rural black South Africans from entering cities in numbers. Individual men in families were allowed temporary passes, but family members were strictly prohibited. Combined, these national and municipal laws confined black people, rural and urban, to impoverished and isolated locations indefinitely.

The horrid conditions of the residential areas in the center city as well as in townships like Ndabeni and Langa combined with the failsafe segregation device of

²⁷¹ Western, 45-46.

²⁷² The experience of working-class people walking to work in Africa’s colonial cities is quite common, and usually illuminates the demand for jitneys continent-wide. For example, see “The Only Way to Get There Was on Foot,” Mutongi, *Matatu: A History of Popular Transportation in Nairobi*, 16-24.

railroads to separate rich from poor. By 1900, Cape Town's railways already helped buttress segregationist, white supremacist ideals. The availability of regional rail transport removed white residences from people of color, and allowed the rich to label the places where people of color lived as slums. Whites did not stop at creating and preserving their elite residential areas after their flight. In addition to populating the city's most desirable areas, white Capetonians also wanted access to the CBD while obscuring the shantytowns and slums that teemed with poor and working-class people of color. In 1934, the white elite pressured the Cape Town municipal government to pass the Slums Act to "improve" city life. The act marked the transition from *de facto* to *de jure* segregation, and some of the most violent forced removals. Western explain that the legislation of slum clearances and forced removals implied white supremacy more than it did city improvement.²⁷³ However, the hierarchy of apartheid white supremacy in a multiracial colonial city like Cape Town did not simply place whites at the top and people of color at the bottom. Like the urban geographies apartheid attempted to engineer, Cape Town was more likely to remove black and Coloured families forcibly than white ones. This mirrored a hierarchy where whites had more rights than people of color. Apartheid made certain this hierarchy would play out in the city geography by increasingly rigidifying and simplifying racial classification through legislation that not only defined groups by race but also provided the means to police the boundaries between them, particularly with acts banning interracial sex and marriages, before more forced removals occurred in the middle of the 20th century. After the racial lines were fixed, the multiracial districts in the CBD needed to be destroyed, so that urban (re-)

²⁷³ Western, 73.

planning of Cape Town could start again from scratch. All this highlighted the limits of biological racism because the near impossible task to define people strictly by race confronted economic forces that could not neatly distinguish white, black, or Coloured experiences.

Precisely because apartheid functioned by turning South Africans' family histories, ancestral traditions, and personal identities into racial categories designed for the sole purpose of administrative control, few communities saw the effects of the Group Areas Act in Cape Town manifest in their bones and on their bodies like mixed-raced South Africans and the so-called Coloured community. People whose identification cards read "Coloured" constituted the majority of Capetonians by 1950. Many lived for decades as neighbors in communities that were later designated as whites-only. Others lived in proximity to or actually in white communities as well as domestic workers and gardeners. Close relationships between white and Coloured families were common in Cape Town. Depending on their class and place of residence, however, Coloured identity existed on a socio-racial continuum, whereby some people may have considered themselves more or less Coloured, more or less black, or more or less white. Although one's place on the continuum depended on the individual's religion, skin color, home language, and ethnicity, the determining factor of Coloured as being more or less white was class. In fact, the Population Registration Act of 1950 afforded some flexibility for people who might have been classified as Coloured to petition to be classified as white.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ A. J. Christopher tracked racial classification changes between 1983-1990 to show the extent to which, by 1990, South Africans could petition to change their racial category. The chart shows that it was indeed possible for individuals to provide reasonable evidence to change their race, and also that there was significant racial fluidity between being "Cape Coloured" and "White." Indeed, the most striking aspect of the visual map

As Cape Town forcibly removed people of color from new “whites-only” areas and put them in townships on the city’s periphery, more and more mixed-race people appealed to population registration’s government agents to be re-classified. Presumably to reduce the number of appeals and make clear the extent to which the city maligned black bodies over mixed-race ones, Cape Town passed the Coloured Labour Preference Policy in 1960 to guarantee their advantages in employment and other sectors of society. Coloured neighborhoods were closer to racial mixing zones, which were set up to meet the needs of the commuter market. Also, their fares were cheaper on trains and tramways because they lived closer to commercial areas. But, more importantly, apartheid gave people designated as Coloured more rights than people designated as African or black.

District Six was the site of one of the most traumatizing forced removals in Cape Town’s public history. Naomi Barnett described District Six very much like the most desirable neighborhoods anywhere in the world today. The quotation’s length reflects how Barnett mixes historical information with the skills of a real estate sales professionals.

In Cape Town, working-class people had congregated in District Six in increasing numbers after WWI in search of shelter and a means of livelihood. Its location was attractive. District Six was in walking distance, or a short bus ride away, of places of employment for most of the local bread-winners. One of the oldest inhabited suburbs of the city, it was also well provided with schools, churches, synagogues, mosques, bioscopes, shops, fish and other markets, butcheries, hotels, cafes, restaurants, pubs, bottle stores, garages, workshops, industrial buildings, and other amenities.²⁷⁵

Christopher put together was the number of successful changes that were petitioned and granted to people who wanted their classification to change from Cape Coloured to White. Christopher, 102.

²⁷⁵ Naomi Barnett, "The Planned Destruction of District Six in 1940," in *Studies in the History of Cape Town, Volume Seven*, ed. Elizabeth van Heyningen (Cape Town: Cape Town History Project Department of History in association with the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1994), 163.

Barnett also likened District Six to the numerous urban ghettos around the world – places that witnessed crime and affluence, and low- and high-culture mingle side-by-side.

[District Six] was the birthplace of leading writers, musicians, actors, politicians, teachers, lawyers, doctors, and academics. Its overcrowded slums were also home to the unemployed, to gangs, and to criminals of various kinds. But the bulk of its inhabitants were law-abiding citizens with deeply-rooted family and community ties.²⁷⁶

Thus, Barnett's District Six descriptions resonate with activists who fight gentrification in places like Brooklyn and other cities whose seediness has sex-appeal, and whose histories have wide appeal to urbanites drawn to neighborhoods that tell better stories than affluent, albeit sterile, neighborhoods perceived by many as places where nothing happens. District Six is remembered and written about as a place where everything happened, and, more importantly, where people from different backgrounds could come together to enjoy everything that did happen. The trauma of District Six's razing fits squarely with worldwide pleas for place-making through participatory story-telling.²⁷⁷

The apartheid government's sudden decision to bulldoze District Six in 1966 surprised the Cape Town City Council. The removal of thousands and the subsequent construction of a new rail line to bring the working-class back into the CBD were both costly measures. In fact, the 1940 Council saw early plans for demolition as fiscally irresponsible. The Council already viewed constructing townships on the outskirts of the city as too costly. They saw creating self-governing bodies for blacks in Eastern Cape rural areas as the better option for curbing the city's growing population in the aftermath

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ In fact, the District Six Museum is known around the world for its ability to tell stories through participation. For the debates over place-making and storytelling at the Museum, see Jeppie, Soudien, and Committee.

of WWII.²⁷⁸ Creating new railroad lines, even then, was becoming far too expensive. However, the election of the National Party and the ratification of the Group Areas Act struck major blows to the Council's urban planning autonomy. While the council was originally involved in planning the destruction of District Six, the apartheid government gave the final word to tear the neighborhood down in 1966. Top-down policies such as the GAA and the destruction of District Six exacerbated tensions between municipal and national authorities. After declaring the bulldozed area a whites-only area, the city planned to turn "District Six" into a commercial area to help boost the city's suffering economy at the time. The council first tabled development, then altogether abandoned it. Instead, the city moved people whose passes read Coloured to Bellville to the north-east of Langa and Mitchell's Plain in the south-east end of the Cape Flats. The city then expanded the Cape Flats railroad line to accommodate those resettled people, all at a local expense.

The joint-interests of the state and the Cape Town City Council fell through by the end of the 1960s, and nothing illuminated the city-state breakup like the destruction of District Six. The same state bureaucracies controlling South Africans of color's mobility was also disempowering local authorities. As a result, the Council developed an apathetic attitude toward the laws of the apartheid government, concentrating instead on

²⁷⁸ "Resettlement programmes were held out from the early 1960s as a means of reducing the numbers of Africans in [the Western Cape]," Humphries added, "however, the distance of the Western Cape from the nearest 'homelands' tended to reduce the impact of resettlement schemes had had elsewhere in South Africa. Thus, it was too difficult to remove black South Africans very far from the Cape Town area to the Eastern Cape because they were too far away. Humphries, 176.

its own interests.²⁷⁹ Cape Town's neglect for the most stringent apartheid policies enabled the infrastructural decline of state-run public transportation facilities like railroads. Not only would the 1970s indeed be characterized as a time of political struggle, but it would also be a period where cities like Cape Town would delegate the responsibility of combatting rebellious political movements to the state. For these reasons, it is necessary to shift our attention to the Johannesburg area, which, after the 1976 Soweto Uprisings, saw the fiercest battles between top-down efforts to limit physical and social mobility, and bottom-up efforts repossess ownership of transportation means and replace white transport modes with black ones. It's in Johannesburg where the story of resisting dispossession and displacement is most clearly illuminated.

The penultimate removal of black and mixed-race people from the city center and dispersal of people of color throughout the distant suburbs and townships along the railroad lines marked the conclusion of white public transport use in Cape Town. The manufacture of motorcars from the 1950s on helped facilitate white exodus from train and tramways all throughout South Africa.²⁸⁰ At the same time, the number of commuters on railroads nationally was increasing to the half million mark in the 1970s.²⁸¹ White

²⁷⁹ In fact, part of the reason I'm able to make this argument is the same reason Wilmot James and Mary Simons included Humphries' essay in their collection. The national apartheid project coming out of Afrikaner experiences on their Great Trek and in the Boer Republics confronted other white South Africans' experiences. Those differences of opinions also divided universities like Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town, which housed James, Simons, Humphries, and the most vocal white dissenters to the apartheid regime. See Wilmot Godfrey James and Mary Simons, eds., *The Angry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989).

²⁸⁰ For the rise of passenger cars and commercial vehicles from 1920-1992, see Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Africa, Asia & Oceania, 1750-2000*, 747, 53.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 712, 16, 20.

flight from public transport, public transport's identity as serving only people of color, combined with local government apathy was reflected in the poor public transport facilities. In addition to the fact that whites-only areas had more economic advantages than black areas, Cape Town was building railroads and townships much faster than it could ensure safe and reliable travel of commuters. Pirie explained that the government's neglect of public transport for people of color had deleterious psychological impacts. Since people of color in Cape Town had to spend more time in dilapidated travel conditions than whites, they could not help but internalize their commuting environments because an eighth of their days was spent traveling.²⁸² Though Pirie did not explicitly explain how commuters' mental health, one can assume these effects from his important "Traveling Under Apartheid" chapter:

Apartheid artificially elongated the work journeys undertaken by the least mobile urban poor. Long-distance commuting occurred much sooner than it would have done under circumstances of organic urban growth and sprawl: it was premature and could not be funded out of the fare box. The public expense and sudden urgency of providing routeways and vehicles meant that other infrastructure was overlooked: bus shelters, benches, kerbs, and pavements were as rare as transport schedules, tariff listing, and public toilets.²⁸³

At the same time black people experienced the conditions of their Foucauldian docility worsen, many whites enjoyed luxurious lifestyles: grand houses, extravagant views of the Atlantic Ocean and Table Mountain, and short or convenient commutes to their places of employments in private vehicles. Black Capetonians experienced a world that was vastly

²⁸² This cycle of creating material and psychological poverty continues today. On average, areas with the highest population densities in Cape Town have the lowest percentages of job opportunities, and thus the longest commutes. Turok, 2353.

²⁸³ Gordon H. Pirie, "Traveling under Apartheid," in *The Apartheid City and Beyond: Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa*, ed. David Smith (London: Routledge, 1992), 173.

different from their white counterparts, and blacks' dependence on public transport reminded them of their place in a white supremacist society every day. In the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, identity was overtly constructed by apartheid and reinforced by the spatial relations separating each designated racial group. It was within these conditions that the black taxi revolution emerged. To illuminate these effects, we shift to the character of repossession and replacement in the black taxi industry during its most important years after the Soweto Uprising of 1976.

CHAPTER FOUR: Black Capitalism in the Taxi Industry: Johannesburg, 1970-1990

Introduction: *Sithutha Isizwe* ('We Carry the Nation')

In September 1986, seven years after its founding, the Southern African Black Taxi Association (SABTA) selected *Sithutha Isizwe* as its official slogan because its message linked the black minibus taxi industry directly to dispossessed and displaced South African peoples' desires for repossession and replacement in the apartheid state. *Sithutha Isizwe* translates in English to "we carry the nation" or "we transport the nation," and SABTA's use of isiZulu language use in the slogan suggested a mythic history of taxis stealing the role of transport away from whites, and vesting it in the hands of black capitalists. The slogan also invoked the way apartheid and colonialism, over 110 years, used forced removals and relocations to turn a large percentage of the entire black South African population into commuters.²⁸⁴ But by expressing the work of public transport in Zulu, the slogan underscored the taxi industry's (as well as "black people's") central role in that century-long history. Independently-owned minibus taxis – not state-subsidized

²⁸⁴ Building on their interrogation of South Africa's forced removals and the language the apartheid used to hide violent processes of dispossession and displacement in the country, the Surplus People's Project define commuters as follows: "The term [commuters] has been used in the report to refer to workers who work outside their place of residence but who are able to travel to and from work on a daily or weekly basis, i.e. as distinct from migrant workers (who only return home monthly or annually) or people working in the place where they live." Their use of the word is inclusive of a great diversity of black South Africans who live in all sorts of living arrangements, permanent or temporary. However, apartheid used the term to also legitimate a sort of non-citizenship status for black South Africans forced to live in homelands, and arresting those under racist pass laws which apartheid designed to curb all presence in areas designated as white. Thus, SPP adds to its definition, "we have not restricted the use of the term to workers travelling between bantustan settlements and non-bantustan centres of employment only, which is official usage." Platzky and Walker, xiv.

buses and trains – brought South Africa’s black working-class to their jobs in whites-only areas and brought them back to their homes in segregated townships, the *Sithutha Isizwe* contended. That apartheid made it possible for disparate fleets of black entrepreneurs to build taxi businesses in segregated black ghettos, shuttling back and forth dispossessed and displaced community members forced to live in the townships, homelands, and informal settlements the Group Areas Act forced them to live in did nothing to mute the black taxi industry’s claims to the roads apartheid created. The men who often spoke for the taxi industry certainly believed that capitalism, even in the midst of forced removals, relocations, and their aftermath, had the potential to change the lives of black South Africans, and black South Africans themselves should play some role in process.

This chapter illuminates the stories of black capitalists in the taxi industry who, collectively, began struggling to make ends meet, and, with the help of the apartheid state, inadvertently built one of the largest black businesses in South Africa before apartheid ended in 1994. Many of the most successful taxi operators became executives and bureaucrats in national taxi associations like SABTA and local ones formed in townships like Soweto, and, through their ties to the automobile industry, represented taxis for automobile manufacturers, tire makers, oil giants, and banks.

Transport, Johannesburg’s Mining Boom, and White Working-class Taxi Drivers

While the earliest histories of dispossession and displacement begin with the VOC’s indigenous hunter-gatherer and pastoralist Khoisan communities of land bordering the Atlantic between the 17th and 19th centuries, and displaced inner-city black communities from their hostels on the docks to townships in the Cape Flats, economically-motivated documents appeared much more frequently in archives

documenting early Johannesburg's transport history. The decades after the 1886 discovery of gold, for example, provided a wealth of archival material about the development of goods transportation, particularly by railroad, Charles van Onselen commented in his important study of the early 20th century social and transformations on the Witwatersrand. "As this new and remarkably complex industrial society was molded, the entire processes was recorded," van Onselen remarked, "in the annals of industry, government commissions of enquiry, the reports of municipal and state officials, the accounts of insiders and outsiders, and in any one of half a dozen newspapers."²⁸⁵ But Johannesburg source material illuminated underclass experiences as much as it did elite sentiments, so, rather than privilege the voices of the wealthy, van Onselen's commitment to social history directed his attention to the struggles between the working-classes. Van Onselen's work, he explained, illuminated "the warm, vibrant and intensely human struggle of people seeking to find a place of dignity and security within a capitalist world that encroached on them all too quickly."²⁸⁶ The story in his important *New Babylon New Nineveh* series began after a moment of transition from rural to urban capital accumulation just before World War I (1886-1914), which overlapped with the development of Cape Town's commuter rail, horse-drawn carriage, and electric omnibus systems. During "the so-called 'reconstruction period' [after the South African War]," van Onselen explained, "the new governing class, largely freed from any direct electoral responsibility replanned the Rand's principal city, and the state," he continued, "came to adopt an unashamedly instrumental role in shaping the future of an increasingly industrial

²⁸⁵ Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914*, xv.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, xvi.

society.”²⁸⁷ The ways in which the Johannesburg’s populace understood industrial life, however, were not new. “What was perhaps most impressive about this working-class in the making,” van Onselen explained, “was the manner in which its members borrowed, shared and adapted practices from older settings and put them to work in the new environment.”²⁸⁸ What the Cape Town portion of my study showed was that this “borrowing” was not exclusive to specific racial groupings. Rather, the very legislative processes that were being tested and rolled out 1,400km to the West facilitated it. It was through the legislative (Cape Town), administrative (Pretoria), and economic (Johannesburg) capitals’ collective, albeit difficult to streamline, investments in hardening lines of race and ethnicity across the entire Union of South Africa that black taxis emerged the rand as the most public and influential throughout the nation. Thus, I shift to Johannesburg to pick up where Cape Town’s story of forced removal and public transport provisioning left off in order reveal the site where the black taxi revolution sought to reclaim a place in South Africa’s national transport provisioning, and at the center of the seat of the nation’s wealth and international fame and glory: the Transvaal.

“By the mid-1890s large industrial cities throughout the world, from Kiev to Kansas, were introducing the electric tram or ‘trolley’ to their inhabitants,” van Onselen reminds in a study of transport’s globalization to South Africa, particularly the Witwatersrand, “both as a response to the dispersal of the working-class and as a means by which to facilitate that process further.”²⁸⁹ Through connecting the proliferation of trollies in cities like Johannesburg to the need for working-class people to find residence

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., xvii.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 164.

in rapidly growing cities, Van Onselen draws scholarly attention to race and class demographics that helped usher in forms of transport that would help continue to make Johannesburg an economically viable center for commerce, whether or not Victorian ideals were met.

While Cape Town's transport provisioning centered on city leisure and the separation between workplace and residence, Johannesburg's was tasked with industrializing a complex agricultural network, that was built out of the wars between strong, centralized agricultural African communities, and Afrikaner settlers. Like electric power later, horse-drawn power in the Transvaal was designed to use farm resources (livestock and crops) to build industrial infrastructure and facilitate transport between rural and urban spaces.²⁹⁰ "During the 1890s," van Onselen explained, "shareholders in Europe had repeatedly seen modestly successful horse-drawn tramways profitably connected into electric systems based on the 'trolley'."²⁹¹ Doing so created tensions between the Kruger government, which enacted policies to ensure Boer profits, and industrial capitalists invested in tapping into international markets. A compromise between the two groups created Johannesburg's initial transport infrastructure. As electric trams became profitable investment opportunities, capitalists petitioned to have them run on the outskirts of town in order to bring farm goods into the city's orbit. Horse-drawn trams, in turn, would bring those goods from the city's orbit into its core. "Both sections of such a system would have the merit of being of direct benefit to burgher agricultural production," van Onselen explained.²⁹² The network also facilitated the growth of private

²⁹⁰ Correspondence Re Cancellation of License-Taxi Cab Driver William Craigen, 165.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 169.

²⁹² Ibid., 173.

cab drivers and owners. In addition to cabbies, the enterprise's dependence on horses created other professions: "stable-keepers," "ferries," "coach builders," "harness makers," "produce merchants," "grooms," "stable boys," and "blacksmiths."²⁹³ Cabbies came from a variety of working-poor backgrounds, including so-called "poor-white" Afrikaners.²⁹⁴ Fewer whites joined the ranks of cabbies when the job became less profitable, however.

While "the small, two-wheeled Cape Cart, drawn by a single horse," van Onselen explained, went out of style as the middle-class expressed a preference for greater comfort in coaches.²⁹⁵ Coaches had windows, blinds, curtains, and/or retractable hoods to protect riders from the elements, but required two horses.²⁹⁶ Transition from private to public transport occurred in the aftermath of the South African War. "Once the British administration and its industrial allies had become hegemonic," van Onselen explained, "they made use of the urban transport system as part of a strategy of social control which was ultimately intended to reduce conflict between capital and labor."²⁹⁷ It was only in 1902, van Onselen explained, "[that] the city's black cab drivers were restricted by law from accepting fares from only the poorest section of the urban population – their fellow Africans."²⁹⁸ 1902 thus inaugurated white immigrant ethnic-based cab associations in

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Maria Lis Lange, "The Political Economy of White Working-class Housing in Johannesburg, 1890-1906," (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Institute for Advanced Social Research, 1996); Charles Dugmore, "From the 'Devil's Dorp' to 'Fair Dorp': The Transformation of Krugersdorp from a Transient Mining Boomtown into a Stable Settler Town, 1887 to 1905," *South African Historical Journal* 62, no. 2 (2010).

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 178.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 179.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 184.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 186.

opposition to black cabs, which had fewer and fewer opportunities to carry black passengers after the 1913 Natives Land Act.²⁹⁹

Repossession, Replacement, and the Southern African Black Taxi Association (SABTA)

At the inaugural meeting of the Southern African Black Taxi Association (SABTA) in 1981, SABTA's first president, Jimmy Sojane, called the day a historic one for black South Africa because it put the reigns of Johannesburg's transport economy, built of the backs of black miners, into black hands. The day not only marked the establishment of South Africa's first national taxi association, but also demonstrated that black and white capitalists could indeed work together toward common ends.

[Today] is the culmination of years and years of hard work by so many of our people. For more than 30 years there are some of us who have patronized various companies, vehicles and products. And for years and years and years their silence was deafening. All they did was receive and all we did was give. During all these years our association in various parts of the country were only small and to be frank, not highly sophisticated and organized. We really had not got ourselves together and I suppose one cannot suggest that these large companies with whom we deal could have done more for us at the time. The real point, ladies and gentlemen, is that at least we have found friends [in big business].³⁰⁰

Sojane then listed off the names of the different companies that helped make the historic day possible: "Datsun [Nissan], Wesbank, Mobil, Shell, BP, Caltex, Castrol, Trek, Total and of course the blue pump from Sasol... We depend enormously upon the supply of your fine products," Sojane told representatives of the companies in attendance that day. "And by the same token you can depend upon the support of members of SABTA," Sojane promised.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 187-190.

³⁰⁰ *Taxi* October 1981.

Sojane's and SABTA's message contrasted starkly with the role transport played for youth activists. When student activists in the 1976 Soweto Uprising protested the mandatory instruction of Afrikaans in black schools, they destroyed buses and trains in acts of resistance. They also policed sites like bus stops and train stations, preventing the majority of South Africa's commuting workforce from traveling to work, in order to put a strain on ways the flow of migrant labor reproduces a racist political economy. Through providing an alternative to state-run transport, taxis helped activists get around. While buses and trains carried so-called "apartheid collaborators," taxis carried the nation. *Sithutha Isizwe*. It was the taxi industry's unique ability to promote capitalism in the Uprising's immediate aftermath that enabled them to carve out a space in South Africa's political climate. In 1977 the apartheid government passed the Road Transportation Act, allowing taxi operators to drive more passengers in larger vehicles. In so doing, the 1977 Act incentivized existing taxi operators' desire to grow their businesses. Together with railroads' countrywide association with the dispossession and displacement of the indigenous plants, animals, and peoples across South Africa, the legislation regulating vehicles that were not the giants of transport representing apartheid was able to create a new avenue for black entrepreneurs to enter a taxi business, even though doing so came with profound difficulty.



Figure 4.1 Soweto Commuter Bus Ridden into Ditch



Figure 4.2 PUTCO Commuter Bus Backed into Building



Figure 4.3 Commuter Bus After Explosion



Figure 4.4 Destroyed Commuter Buses Side by Side, Interior View



Figure 4.5 “Stay-Away” Signage

Thus, also in 1981, the apartheid state hoped to shift favor back into the hands of buses by appointing Peter Welgemoed, a Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) transport economics professor, to head a Commission of Inquiry into Bus Passenger Transportation. “By 1982,” McCaul observed, “it was estimated that over 90% of black taxis were minibuses carrying up to nine passengers,” which began cutting into buses profits.³⁰¹ So, the commission proposed to amend the 1977 Act by defining taxis as any commercial vehicle carrying more than five passengers, which would define minibus taxis, those very same transport modes that were gaining momentum by the time the Welgemoed Commission convened, as buses. This chapter argues that black drivers and owners’ opposition to being forced to abandon their hard-earned vehicles crippled the

³⁰¹ McCaul, 39.

Welgemoed Commission's proposal to redefine the minibus taxis they had run for half a decade as buses.

In the aftermath of SABTA organizing, the decade between 1983-1993 heard the black taxi industry's loudest voices, and many white leaders in government and industry began listening in ways white South Africans in power had never done before. Moreover, because opposition to the Welgemoed commission was not unilateral, the taxi industry saw significant infighting and diverging visions of what their newfound political and economic power should look like. SABTA's President Sojane, for example, saw the Welgemoed Commission's attempts to more clearly define which types of vehicles could be taxis (and, therefore, which vehicles were ineligible) as an opportunity to root out unlicensed minibus taxi drivers who were competing increasingly with licensed taxi drivers. By this time, however, the numbers of unregistered minibus taxi drivers equaled the number of drivers with legitimate licenses, so, by taking the legalists' side within the industry, Sojane alienated the other side. "Mr Sojane was criticized as a 'sellout' by illegals," McCaul explained, "who saw his proposals [to more clearly define taxis] as an attempt by the legalists to entrench their position at the expense of the illegal majority."³⁰² Though this would serve as one of the conditions undergirding the taxi wars, it is important to see how SABTA finessed Sojane's departure, and began building its brand

³⁰² Ibid., 44. The story concerning Sojane, however, is largely untold. Instead, it's been much more common to view the infighting within the taxi industry as part of the apartheid regime's strategy of destabilization, and the wider mafia-like control over routes. Importantly, the latter saw very little difference between legal and illegal taxis because either was capable of protecting their routes with violence and intimidation. Khosa, "Routes, Ranks and Rebels: Feuding in the Taxi Revolution."; Sekhonyane and Dugard.

around black uplift and togetherness, despite the tensions growing between the few who became licensed, and the very many who clandestinely operated taxis.

Black Uplift, Pan-Africanism, and the 20th Century

The question of how black communities, rooted in resistance politics, could be so swayed by capitalism recalls the predicament and popularity of Booker T. Washington in the United States, South Africa, and across the diaspora at the dawn of automobility at the turn of the 20th century. Thus, as a way to further unsettle the origin myth of South Africa's minibus taxi, this section weaves together the life histories documented in *Taxi* with the philosophies of black capitalists writing before apartheid: most notably, Marcus Garvey and Booker T. Washington, as well as their compatriots in South Africa, John Langalibalele Dube, founder of the Ohlange Institute, and author of *The Black Problem* (1920) D.D.T. Jabavu.³⁰³ All extraordinary men, they all grappled with the question of how to advance black people in a white supremacist world. For Garvey, the answer was clear: "The only protection against INJUSTICE is POWER – Physical, financial and scientific."³⁰⁴ Thus, the section ends by suggesting how these three elements of "power" have come to shape what could very well be a philosophy of black business under apartheid, but viewed through the lens of South Africa's taxi industry.

Booker T. Washington is most famous for his autobiography *Up From Slavery* as well as his 1895 speech at the Atlanta Exposition. At the predominantly white showcase

³⁰³ Davidson D. T. Jabavu, *The Black Problem: Papers and Addresses on Various Native Problems* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969).

³⁰⁴ Marcus Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for the Africans*, ed. Amy Jacques Garvey, Centennial ed. (Dover, Mass.: Majority Press, 1986), 5.

of the world's most cutting age technologies in agriculture at the turn of the 20th century, Washington famously advocated for Southern white elites to let Southern blacks be field laborers, not intellectuals.

Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the production of our hands, and fault to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life; [we] shall prosper in proportion as we learn to draw the line between the superficial and the substantial, the ornamental gewgaws of life and the useful. *No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem.* It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Now should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities?³⁰⁵

In his autobiography, Washington argued that his belief that Southern blacks should learn to be more industrious with their hands rather than their minds was developed in his travels throughout the areas in the South where blacks outnumbered whites 3:2. In this "Black Belt" of the United States, Washington remembered that the saddest thing he had ever seen was a black boy in dire poverty attempting to learn French from a textbook.³⁰⁶ The scene moved Washington to put a philosophy of what he called industrial education into practice at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

A brilliant educator, Washington developed a curriculum that taught students at the Institute skills in industry, like brick making and construction. Washington then had

³⁰⁵ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), 159.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

the students apply what they learned on the campus. Under Washington's administration, Tuskegee transformed from a school consisting of an old, beaten-down barn to the premier institution for blacks anywhere in the world. His success at Tuskegee inspired educators like John Langalibalele Dube to follow Washington's lead, but across the Atlantic Ocean in South Africa. "As in Booker Washington's institution," wrote Dube, "so here [at Ohlange Institute], no money is expended for outside labor which the pupils can be made to do for themselves."³⁰⁷ But, Washington was only a supporter of curricula intended to make black students good Christians and good workers. "Education" in the liberal arts sense, however, angered Washington. Washington viewed any schooling that lacked elements of industrial education as insufficient for the 20th century, which he viewed as the Industrial Age. Washington viewed the higher education that W.E.B. DuBois advocated as that which one acquired to avoid doing manual labor. Washington believed that higher education exacerbated the divide between people who worked with their hands, and people who didn't; and, thus, between blacks and whites. Washington's real gripe was with the classism of the Northern United States.

In the stroke of a pen, D.D.T. Jabavu settled the DuBois-Washington debate by tailoring both arguments to best benefit black students in the aftermath of the Native Land Act of 1913. "In South Africa, there is room, yea, *urgency*, for the development of present institutions in such a way that they provide education, which," Jabavu concluded, "will (1) like Tuskegee deal with the immediate needs of the majority of the black races, and (2) like Howard University, enable native teachers to qualify themselves for

³⁰⁷ Dube quoted in Wilcox (1903) and reproduced in W Manning Marable, "Booker T. Washington and African Nationalism," *Phylon* (1960) (1974).

administering it.”³⁰⁸ Also, by transposing what he saw in his visit to the Tuskegee Institute across the diaspora and back to South Africa, Jabavu challenged the nationalist claim the world would see almost 100 years after *The Black Problem*. This is the claim that Uganda’s President Yoweri Museveni articulated, that Africa needs fewer university courses in the arts and humanities, and more training in the sciences.³⁰⁹ Just as Washington argued in his manifesto on industrial education, “mere training of the hand without the culture of the brain and heart would mean little.”³¹⁰ Thus, Washington continues to provide lessons for the 21st century.

In fact, Washington intended for his philosophy of industrial education to transgress space and time, and to inspire black people for as long as capitalism and white supremacy remained in the world. In other words, Washington believed in the promise of world history, as he saw it in his Industrial Age. “It is necessary to emphasize the matter of industrial education,” Washington wrote in *Future of the American Negro*, “as a means of giving the black man the foundation of a civilization upon which he will grow and prosper.”³¹¹ But Washington’s philosophy assumed that agriculture and industry were the sole drivers of capitalism in the 20th century. What Washington could not predict was the extent to which finance capitalism would become central to the accumulation of wealth, particularly in the areas of technology not long after his death, and especially in the interwar years.

³⁰⁸ Jabavu, *The Black Problem: Papers and Addresses on Various Native Problems*, 59.

³⁰⁹ Dan Wandera, "Arts Courses Are Useless - Museveni," *Daily Monitor*, August 18 2014.

³¹⁰ Booker T. Washington, *Future of the American Negro* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1900), 5.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Although his philosophy was diasporic, Washington's perspective was parochial, in that he developed his theory of industrial education from a particular place in time, the post-Reconstruction Black Belt South. For Washington, the problem of the 20th century was "how to make these millions of Negroes self-supporting, intelligent, economic and valuable citizens," he wrote, "as well as to bring about proper relations between them and the white citizens among whom they live."³¹² Conceptualizing his theory of capitalism through his experience as a black capitalist in the South, Washington truly believed that hard work would pay off for black people in the long run because, indeed, it had at Tuskegee. "My experience is that there is something about human nature which always makes an individual recognize merit," he famously wrote in his autobiography, "no matter what color of skin merit is found."³¹³ But the fate of Marcus Garvey would prove Washington wrong as finance became much more central in the wealth of empires. Before turning to this, however, it is instructive to view how *Taxi* also marshaled the tropes of industrial education in the stories of the taxi industry and its operators.

Why would *Taxi* dilute the nationalist story out of the capitalist story of the taxi industry in the life histories it documented only to introduce another nationalist narrative once again? *Taxi* did this to evade apartheid and inspire activism – not on the front lines of the anti-apartheid movement, but through a politics of economic self-help. In many ways, *Taxi* was responding to the shifts in late capitalism, which compelled the industrious away from industry and towards finance. In other words, *Taxi* endeavored to respond to the neoliberal economic policies of the 1980s. Black economic thought in the

³¹² Ibid., 5.

³¹³ *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography*, 111.

Washingtonian vein was tied much too closely to industry to recognize the growing importance of finance in capitalism. The industrious taxi operator in the 1980s pursued finance capital to the same extent that Tuskegee alumni pursued their own plot of land. The failure to recognize this shift was seen most profoundly in the fall of Marcus Garvey.

Garvey famously attempted to finance his shipping company Black Star with a few business partners by devising a direct mail solicitation scheme. But prosecutors charged Garvey with selling shares in a false company, or in the words of a biographer, “selling space on a mythical ship.”³¹⁴ Little did Garvey know that the footing on which his company stood was what he himself called “bluff.” “The whole world is run on bluff,” Garvey wrote.³¹⁵ “No race, no nation, no man has any divine right to take advantage of others. Why allow the other fellow to bluff you.”³¹⁶ It is certainly important to remember that Garvey’s widow Amy Jacques edited his famous *Philosophies and Opinions*, meaning for the collection to redeem Garvey, who the media and the black elite had sullied before his death. But rather than argue whether or not Garvey’s business and ship were real, I want to stress that it is important to situate the moment of the controversy in the interwar years, and Europe’s growing dependence on US finance.

Recognizing a different moment in the history of capitalism (and ultimately falling victim to it) the *Philosophies and Opinions* of Garvey tailored Washington’s diasporic philosophy of industrial education for a world much more concerned with sound investments. Unlike DuBois and Washington, Garvey was unconcerned with the

³¹⁴ See Essien Udosen Essien-Udom, “An Introduction to the Second Edition,” in Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for the Africans*, xx.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

potential for history to prove Hegel wrong. “Being satisfied to drink of the dregs from the cup of human progress will not demonstrate our fitness as a people to exist alongside of others,” Garvey declared in true Washingtonian fashion.³¹⁷ “But when of our own initiative we strike out to build industries, governments, and ultimately empires,” Garvey explained, recognizing the issue of race in the interwar years, “then and only then will we as a race prove to our Creator and to man in general that we are fit to survive and capable of shaping our own destiny.”³¹⁸ In so declaring, Garvey articulated a type of economic ambition that Washington spurned. Rather than adopting a philosophy that emphasized hard work over generations, Garvey demanded an entrepreneurial gusto for his present moment. In so doing, Garvey promoted an anti-teleological stance that only an irresponsible borrower would understand. Reading Garvey alongside Washington reminds us of how the very search for “truths” and “ruptures” reflect responses to capitalism and modernity at particular moments.

But like Washington’s ethos of industrial education, Garvey’s diasporic philosophy of black business extends beyond the Atlantic world in the interwar period. In the same *Philosophies and Opinions*, Garvey contradicts his aversion to history by advancing developmentalist arguments about black progress and the black race. But because of his preoccupation with racial purity, Garvey marshals heterosexuality as the way to chart the future.³¹⁹ “All of us may not live to see the higher accomplishment of an

³¹⁷ Ibid., 8.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

African Empire,” Garvey explained.³²⁰ “But we in our life-time can so work and act as to make the dream a possibility within another generation.”³²¹ And it is through the lens of gender and sexuality that we truly begin to view the stakes of a philosophy of black business seen across Garvey, Washington and the taxi industry.

Both Garvey and Washington were part of a global group of mostly black men who believed that capitalism would solve racial inequalities because it offered black entrepreneurs a rulebook to possess cash, credit, and capital, and make a place for them and people that looked like them in societies stratified by haves and have-nots. This group found their voice when blacks were being lynched or barred from jobs and the polls in a supposedly democratic United States South, when a new Union of South Africa was writing into law the dispossession and displacement of black people, and in a moment of global uncertainty about empire in the aftermath of World War I that ended with a worldwide depression for capitalists everywhere. Despite the bleak realities of black economic and social life for the majority of communities and individuals (particularly black women), Jimmy Sojane and the chief representatives of South Africa’s national taxi association in the 1980s echoed Garvey and Washington’s faith in the ability of capitalism to bring about racial harmonies through racial uplift. “If the [black] man can supply the needs for [basic] wants,” Washington explained, “then it will lead eventually to a demand for the first products and with the demand will come the ability to appreciate it and profit from it.”³²² The question this chapter poses to Washington, Garvey, Sojane

³²⁰ Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for the Africans*, 13.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Washington, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography*, 112.

and others in retrospect is whether or not product demands and the appreciation and profit that comes from it benefits very many across different social locations, or merely a few.

While the majority white International Labor Organization thought capitalism, regardless of association with marginalized racial identities, would always take advantage of the poor, black or white, communities of black thinkers saw great potential in the possibilities of capitalism to improve black life, particularly after the 19th century, which witnessed the legal end of the slave trade and chattel slavery in the Americas – legacies thought to have forever disadvantaged black people.³²³ Coming out of the turn of the 20th century, which saw black dispossession and displacement in South Africa, and throughout Africa and the Diaspora, black capitalists sought to inspire economic action, particularly amongst black men across the world.³²⁴ Men of the African Diaspora like Marcus Garvey illuminated Pan-Africanism to link black capitalist leaders throughout the world. However, little attention has been paid to petty bourgeois capitalists in Africa, many of whom did not read, let alone write books.³²⁵ What they did have, as this chapter shows, were licenses to operate taxis, street knowledge, and political savvy. As in the United States, at the same time that the South African state was removing black communities forcibly from Cape Town and Johannesburg, a small handful of educated

³²³ The most notable thinker within this vein was Booker T. Washington, who I discuss in this chapter. Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963 (1901 Originally)).

³²⁴ The most notable thinker within this vein was Marcus Garvey, who I also discuss at length in this chapter. Marcus Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for the Africans*, ed. Amy Jacques Garvey, Centennial ed. (Dover, Mass.: Majority Press, 1986 (1923 Originally)).

³²⁵ The dearth of studies on African Garveyites, for example, is the subject of the following study. Robert Trent Vinson, *The Americans Are Coming! Dreams of African American Liberation in Segregationist South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012).

African Americans turned to capitalism as a way for blacks to pull themselves by bootstraps, and for the black race.³²⁶ Together, although not always in concert, black capitalists sought to repossess the cash and education they had lost through colonial and slave dispossession and displacement, and replace colonial and white supremacist institutions with their own. African churches, political organizations, and community-run schools at the turn of the 20th century was the earliest to do this, but, with the passing of the Road Transportation Act of 1977, taxi owners sought to do the same as their progenitors had done, but through capitalism.

Ideas about capitalism spread across black Atlantic communities for over a hundred years now. In the beginning of the 20th century, news of Booker T. Washington's successful Tuskegee Institute and Garveyism had spread across South Africa and got picked up by self-named Garveyites and Washingtonians, who wielded their self-help philosophies to create schools, churches, and small businesses catering to black communities. While South Africa figured prominently in the story of Garveyism's spread throughout the world, for example, no study before mine situates South Africa's taxis within global intellectual circles which proudly declared Africa for the Africans. Robert Vinson argued that black South African religious leaders indigenized Garveyism and used their own presses to demonstrate Garvey's ideals in action.³²⁷ While Vinson saw African adoption of African American and West Indian thought as signaling a large and historic shift in world history, taxi drivers could not wait for a "second coming." The

³²⁶ These themes continue today in popular culture, particularly in music. Paul Gilroy, "'... We Got to Get over before We Go under...' Fragments for a History of Black Vernacular Neoliberalism," *new formations: a journal of culture/theory/politics* 80-81 (2013).

³²⁷ Vinson, 16.

story of taxis shows how driver-entrepreneurs liked their working-class industry because it could be taken up quickly to build a little capital during sudden shifts in everyday cash flows. Still, drivers contributed their stories to a movement of black liberation that superseded their immediate circumstances as dispossessed and displaced township residents. Moreover, Vinson's description of "the kaleidoscopic nature" of Garveyism makes his philosophy of black capitalism useful for understanding the multitudinous taxis which began to emerge as early as the 1940s. Precisely because Garvey's philosophy was broad and the need for black economic empowerment was so pressing in so many townships in South Africa, what dovetailed by 1940, Vinson explained, "was many diffuse and decentralized South African Garveyisms, included many forms that would have been unknown and unrecognizable to Garvey himself."³²⁸ Garvey's story reveals, therefore, how the broad interpretations of the 1930 Motor Transportation Act would take on a life of its own through the varying interpretations of local road transportation boards.

Importantly, Vinson showed that the kaleidoscopic hopes Garvey-type liberation ideologies inspired in South Africa posed a particular threat to white segregationists who had spent nearly the last hundred years ensuring that infrastructure met their white supremacist ideals. However, precisely because my thesis exceeds Vinson's timeframe (1890-1940), Vinson never explained how the weakening apartheid system conceded new "liberties" to black taxi entrepreneurs. Rather than seeing the deregulation of taxis as enabling a black advancement through neoliberal economic philosophies, the apartheid state deviously used deregulation to destabilize the ANC's political momentum at a time

³²⁸ Ibid., 17.

when the international community's sanctions against the apartheid state were the strongest.

What connected black capitalists in my study to ones in the early Atlantic world was the use of the press to advance black capitalist philosophies. Just as important as Garvey's economic philosophies was the newspaper he published, the *Negro World*. And just like Garvey, they hired black South African journalists to document the rise of their home-grown taxi industry, first in the magazine *Taxi*, and then in the newspaper *Drive On*.

Representations of Black Taxi Capitalism: *Taxi* (1980-1985) and *Drive On* (1985-1991)

By reporting on the world of everyday black capitalism, black newspapers *Taxi* and *Drive On* engaged in a project of social history.³²⁹ Over approximately a decade, *Taxi* documented the lives of ordinary albeit enterprising people who ran taxis after and before the 1977 Act. But more than simply giving these people a voice, the paper demonstrated the technological savvy of black people, many of which did not have formal education. Closely aligned with the country's most powerful taxi associations, all based in the Transvaal Province's cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria, *Taxi* and *Drive On* interviewed over 100 drivers, male and female, young and old, leaving behind a rich archive of life

³²⁹ The press has a long history of developing alongside new and often controversial forms of public transportation. William Randolph Hearst's newspapers, for example, captured the vast underworld growing beneath early 20th century New York City's feet (i.e. the subway system), and their stories replayed those goings-on to commuters on their long rides downtown. "At a very early stage in their history," Michel W. Brooks explains, "New York's newspapers developed a symbiotic relationship with its transit system." Brooks, 74.

histories and oral histories which soon became forgotten as the Taxi Wars unfolded at the same time taxi owners had the ears of the automotive industry and ministers of transport. Taxi owners and drivers' life histories in *Taxi* and *Drive On* reveal their activities and self-conceptions as part of a long, global history of black capitalism across the 20th century. But when repossession and replacement turned too violent, the newspapers went bust.

Published between 1985 and 1991, *Drive On* described itself as “The official and ONLY journal of the Southern African Black Taxi Association,” as well as “The mouthpiece of the taxi industry.” Founded in the immediate aftermath of the Soweto Uprising, the Southern African Black Taxi Association (or SABTA) as the largest and most powerful organization of its kind. *Drive On*'s primary function was to inform all 60,000 of SABTA's members of the goings on in the taxi industry (Figure 4.6). *Drive On* solicited support from the taxi masses by profiling its staff. *Drive On* told its readers who to trust in government; or, in this case, who not to trust (Figure 4.7).



Figure 4.6 The official and ONLY journal of the Southern African Black Taxi Association



Figure 4.7 Profiling Who (Not) To Trust in the Taxi Industry



Figure 4.8 Marketing Masculinity in the Taxi Industry

Drive On used the latest advertising techniques to sell tires, oil, oil filters, and vehicles.

Drive On told its readers to “Support your advertisers [because] they support you.” *Drive On* announced the latest boxing matches and soccer games. But more than anything else, SABTA used *Drive On* to achieve its mission of supporting its black readers. The article highlighted on the screen attempted to use the newspaper’s influence to communicate the needs of the community. It reads: “The SABTA Marketing Office in Pretoria was asked by the Executive Committee to launch a ‘Help-Line’ in *Drive-On*. As a launching pad, both SABTA members and the black community are requested to send (strictly in writing) in your problems which will be answered by the SABTA marketing staff

according to their specific lines of expertise. [These include] help schemes and other day-to-day problems the black community may suffer from.”



Figure 4.9 A Paper for the People

Here we also see Revelation Ntola recording the concerns of taxi operators with the intent to publish them in an upcoming issue of *Drive On*. I will come back to SABTA’s philanthropic ethos later in the chapter. Importantly, *Drive On* demonstrated SABTA’s confidence in business interests and the market to challenge the racism of apartheid and promote cross-racial and intercultural solidarity. On the left we see SABTA’s director of marketing James Chapman accepting a Zulu royal staff and gourd of traditional Zulu beer for using his whiteness to help the taxi industry set up the meetings in the first place.

As SABTA grew the taxi business through collaborating with government, other white-owned businesses began advertising to this new black elite more and more. Here we see special discounts for SABTA members. These taxi operators were some of the

best black middle-class consumers, and car companies benefitted the most from the industry's business.

The image shows two side-by-side newspaper advertisements for Price 'n' Pride Furniture Showrooms. Both ads feature a large, bold headline 'SPECIAL OFFER TO SABTA MEMBERS' at the top. The left ad displays a 'KAREN' BEDROOM SUITE with a price tag of '399⁹⁰' and a deposit of 'R41,79 AND R25,13 PER MONTH'. It includes a photograph of a man in a suit and the slogan 'We treat every customer like our only customer..'. The right ad features a 'SET OF THREE "JANICE" COFFEE TABLES' with a price tag of '149⁹⁰' and a deposit of 'R16,80 DEPOSIT R8,48 PER MONTH'. It also includes a photograph of a man in a suit and the slogan 'AN UNCLE IN THE FURNITURE BUSINESS.'. Both ads list several branch locations at the bottom, including 41 Princess Avenue, Benoni; 297 Pross Street, Pretoria; 63 Landroet Mare Street, Pietersburg; and Midtown Mall, 99 Plain Street, Rustenburg.

SPECIAL OFFER TO SABTA MEMBERS

PRICE 'N' PRIDE FURNITURE SHOWROOMS

399⁹⁰
DEPOSIT R41,79 AND R25,13 PER MONTH

We treat every customer like our only customer..

SET OF THREE "JANICE" COFFEE TABLES

149⁹⁰
R16,80 DEPOSIT R8,48 PER MONTH

AN UNCLE IN THE FURNITURE BUSINESS.

WEEKEND SHOPPING HOURS AT ALL BRANCHES

• 41 Princess Avenue, Benoni. Tel. (011) 54-7511
• 297 Pross Street, Pretoria. Tel. (012) 28-4496
• 63 Landroet Mare Street, Pietersburg. Tel. (01521) 75-1912
• Midtown Mall, 99 Plain Street, Rustenburg. Tel. (01421) 20511

Figure 4.10 Furniture Discounts for SABTA Members



Figure 4.11 “Nissan Donates 32 Taxis to SABTA”



Figure 4.12 “Rags to Riches:” Middle-Class Dreams of Owning a Taxi

Drive On also used profiles of SABTA families to show its readers how the taxi industry helps its people in the most intimate of spaces: the home. While the Soweto Uprising’s attacks on busses and trains suggest race and class were the lenses through which black South Africans viewed opportunities for repossession and replacement, *Drive On*’s profiles of girls, women, and families offer a rare opportunity to see how gender also shaped the industry. As these advertisements suggest, *Drive On* loved to market to men. Indeed, men made up and still make up the majority of taxi owners and drivers. But *Drive On* also highlighted taximen’s relationship with women, and boys and girls. Readers saw the SABTA president carrying with winner of the 1985 Miss SABTA contest. They also saw sex selling Firestone tires. They even saw large manufactures like

Nissan taking part in the gendered nation of the business – advertising its custom SABTA taxis with winners of the Pretoria United Taxi Association beauty pageant.



Figure 4.13 Sex and Young Women in the Taxi Industry

In an industry largely understood to be dominated by men, *Drive On* went to great lengths to profile women in the taxi industry. The “Drive On Woman” series appeared just before Hendrik Schoeman legalized 16-passenger minibus taxis. “Drive On Woman” was its own section. In every one of “Drive On Woman’s” profiles, the taxi woman, who, despite all odds, runs a business and takes care of the home. The “Drive On Woman” is the model middle-class black woman. Here’s what one “Drive On Woman” episode said about one taxi owner, Mrs. Motile.

Much against age, which is beginning to tell, the energetic Mrs Lettie Motile aged 52 of Ratanda in Heidelberg can still divide her time among her family business – the taxi, spend eight hours a day as an employee at the local hospital, and still goes about her house chores as a mother. “Discipline, and programme yourself well.” That was a quick response from Mrs Motile when she was asked how she managed all three jobs together. She elaborated, “Each of the three can be a full-time occupation on its own. The secret is that you have to be very strict with yourself. Of course, with help from an organization like SABTA, you cannot go wrong with a taxi business. I find it the easiest of all the work I have to do. Emotionally, Mrs Motile emphasized, “Hail SABTA, and thumbs up to all who are involved in the running of the organization, be they black or white.” After a pause, she continued, “Maybe, I am able, because of the love I have for humanity. When you work at the hospital, no matter what your designation may be, you are serving humanity. I love people. In the taxi business your concern remains people. You cannot separate me from people and humanity.” Mrs Motile has an old vehicle, which is now full of problems because of wear and tear. The end repairs to the vehicle is the major problem she is experiencing. “With SABTA help,” she says, “my problems will soon be solved. I am seriously considering a new vehicle. my committee is always helpful. With all the SABTA benefits available, i intend to keep the vehicle for a few more weeks, and then it will be replaced by a new one.” Mrs Motile has been in the family taxi business since 1971. When her husband passed away in 1985, she was an employee at the local hospital as a servant, a job she has been doing with great “relish” for years. The death of her husband meant that she must stretch her responsibilities to more concern of the family business. She holds a valid driver’s license, and she wants to acquire a public driver’s license so that she can assist her taxi driver, who is incidental her brother-in-law. She stated, “At my age, you will note that I am no more that much of a housewife. I am a granny with grown-up children. They can see to the house while I do my best to get them all through school.” Her first born is a 30-year-old son, who still lives at home, and she has a 25-year-old daughter who is now Mrs Kamela. She is a grand-mother of three, and they all live in Ratanda. Mr Peter Makgale the chairman of the local Taxi Association rates Mrs Motile as one of the most co-operative members in the area.³³⁰

³³⁰ *Drive On* 1986 October.



Figure 4.14 M. J. Sekamotho's Taxis

While discussions of taxis today reveal the experiences of women, families, girls, and their roles in the taxi industry, the cultural world of taxis that *Drive On* revealed was an important site where black capitalism and respectability politics of gender commingled.³³¹

³³¹ Also, by documenting the stories of black petty-capitalists thriving in the 1980s, *Taxi* depicted activities different from the liberation archive. Liberation stories tracked the lives of students and other revolutionaries. Perhaps because of this, studies of taxis have continued to ignore the taxi press. While McCaul's study, for example, used evidence from the press to support original interviews with taxi entrepreneurs, I hope to view the press as historical work itself. Viewing *Taxi* as anything other than history, particularly social history, inadvertently dismisses both the literary and technological savvy of black

Philosophy of Black Business Under Apartheid

Sojane believed that the day was proof that the hard work of people like Lazarus Morobane and his daughter Maria Morobane paid off even if the dividends weren't apparent in previous generations. The intergenerational dynamic of wealth accumulation played a significant role in how *Taxi* told the Morobanes' life histories. Before operating taxis, Lazarus was an unemployed spendthrift, *Taxi* reported. "It never bothered me to take a train and go to Krugersdorp just to play cards out there," Lazarus told *Taxi*. "Very often I was lucky and returned with some money, enough to look after myself." But Lazarus believed that he never would have gotten into the taxi business at all if he wasn't an obsessive card player. In fact, "I was gambling with friends one day in the street at Sophiatown during the bus boycott when, as I watched the people in the queue waiting for the taxis," Lazarus remembered, "I saw that each time there was a taxi coming, people just came from nowhere and joined the queue in front." Keen to take advantage of the demand for taxis in the midst of a boycott, "I found myself having stopped gambling completely and was suddenly busy arranging the people in lines," Lazarus said. That moment of political struggle transformed Lazarus' opportunism into the opportunity for his daughter to discover her passion. "I love handling cars," Maria told *Taxi*. "The feeling I get when controlling a car is superb. I cannot just explain it." Defying traditional gender roles, Maria was one many albeit a minority of women who worked in the taxi industry as a driver. "She says that working in an office could never equal the joy she gets from handling a car," *Taxi* noted. "Her father, however, told me that at one time, just before

enterprise (i.e. journalism, driving, management and operations) in South Africa during apartheid. Not only did the articles in *Taxi* demonstrate the industry's deep knowledge

she joined him in the [taxi] rank,” *Taxi*’s reporter made sure to mention, “she had even gone to the extent of driving for a white taxi company in Johannesburg but the long hours and late finishing had discouraged her, and that was how she had come to work [for her father].”³³²

Although gender and generation were important themes in the life histories in the pages of *Taxi*, the majority of the narratives emphasized hard, work struggle, and technological savvy without ever mentioning the word “apartheid.” Like Booker T. Washington, Mbulaleni Wilfred Dhlamini valued industriousness and the struggle for property over the pursuit of a liberal arts education. “When I was growing up I sometimes had to miss school in order to look after the cattle and goats,” Dhlamini told *Taxi* in 1981. “When I was a little older I became a full time labourer – this lasted for one year. I then persuaded my parents to move from the farm. I had managed to reach Standard 2 at school and it was obvious I was not going to get much more schooling,” he lamented. But after leaving his parents, Dhlamini worked as a night watchman and shop clerk, and had a money lending business on the side before a colleague stole his clientele, putting him out of business. “Then in 1968 I bought a car from a taxi owner in Springs,” Dhlamini reported. “It was a 1960 Chevrolet,” one of the more popular sedans used in the taxi industry before minibuses. But Dhlamini encountered two problems. The first was that he couldn’t drive. So, Dhlamini paid the owner extra to teach him. Although Dhlamini was largely unschooled, *Taxi* reported that he had a natural inclination for driving. After one lesson, “Mr Dhlamini got into the car and did exactly as he had been shown,” *Taxi* reported, and “to his pleasant surprise the car started to move and he wasted no time

³³² Interview with Lazarus Morobane and Maria Morobane, *Taxi* October 1980.

getting himself fully acquainted with the controls of the car.” Dhlamini owed his success to his merit and measured his wealth in terms of how many taxis he owned. “By 1975 I had 5 taxis and now I have 13; 4 mini buses and 9 Chevrolet Kommandos,” Dhlamini bragged. “The minibuses were all bought this year.”³³³

The life histories in *Taxi* emphasized strength of resolve rather than resistance to apartheid, though the reporters kept readers aware of the different historical junctures in the lives of the people they profiled. Mbango Nkosi was in his mid-20s during the Second World War and the inauguration of the apartheid regime. At the time he worked on a white farm in his home town of Boshhoek. “It was just one year since we started our school when [the war] started and Mr [Koos] de Jager joined the army,” Nkosi remembered. “I had to take full responsibility at the farm [and] look after livestock and check if the sheep were still in order.” Although he never talked about apartheid, Nkosi did tell *Taxi* that he met DF Malan once in 1944, just before Malan was elected the first Prime Minister of apartheid South Africa. “When Dr. Malan visited the Majuba Monument,” *Taxi* reported, “Nkosi was chosen to be his guide and to take care of him.”³³⁴

The fondness in which *Taxi* and Nkosi remembered DF Malan would shock a 21st century reader. The story of Nkosi reminded me of the politics of the archive. Yes, there are slippages where periodicals like *Taxi* say something about apartheid when they were probably not allowed. It makes sense to temper stories that would risk having the periodical banned if it said anything negative about the regime. But the slippage also

³³³ Interview with Mbulaleni Wilfred Dhlamini, *Taxi* February 1981.

³³⁴ Interview with Mbango Nkosi, *Taxi* August 1981.

reminded us of what ultimately gets lost in life histories such as Nkosi. Struggles were far more mundane in *Taxi* than in the scholarship on taxis written in the 1990s. Not once do any of the people profiled mention the word “apartheid” in their testimonies. None of the life histories or the characterizations of the taxi industry say anything about the economics of separate racial development. People speak about “hardships” and “struggling,” but primarily to talk about (un)employment, schooling or lack thereof, and various other family circumstances. And these challenges are always overcome. Perhaps this is just the case.

In addition to being an important cite for repossession and replacement, most taxi operators, owners, and drivers saw juggling jobs as rather ordinary. Many told stories about running taxis and shebeens, or doing seasonal taxi work. Just as we know from this history of prostitution, wage earning in any industry is never completely secure.³³⁵ People adapted to varying situations. For as long as it has been around, taxi ownership could never be separated from everyday entrepreneurship in both city and country life in South Africa. Esther Sekotho, for example, worked as a domestic worker, fruit seller, shopkeeper, and salesperson before she became a taxi operator. It is therefore impossible to ever characterize a taxi operator simply as such without recognizing the range of opportunities available and the opportunities to start and run multiple businesses consecutively or simultaneously. But much more important to Sekotho was her family and religion. “It is more than 33 years that I have stayed happily with my husband, Alfred,” Sekotho remembered. “And I have served the lord with my family.”³³⁶

³³⁵ Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

³³⁶ Ibid.

In many ways, all the detail in the life histories in *Taxi* is unimportant for the project of building a philosophy of black business under apartheid and the ability for industrial education and economic might to advance black people. Within this vein, the banality of the life histories is a success in and of itself precisely because it unsettles dominant narratives of the anti-apartheid resistance. In its project of social history, *Taxi* utilized the life histories detailed above as evidence of the success of the taxi industry to make otherwise extraordinary lives boring but comfortable. *Taxi* portrayed the lives of the leadership, on the other hand, in a far more heroic light. *Taxi* marshaled their stories to create a narrative of a black taxi revolution.

Philemon Motshabang was a tailor before he bought a Pontiac sedan in 1957 to start his taxi business in Mapetla township in Soweto (the Southwest locations of Johannesburg). “At that time petrol was still cheap and maintenance on cars was still cheap,” Motshabang recalled.³³⁷ “So I found I was ready to try my luck in that direction.”³³⁸ Motshabang ran that business for two decades before South Africa passed the Road Transportation Act of 1977 (RTA77). The ability to carry eight passengers instead of four, however, did not help out his taxi business much. “Our main problem now [in 1980] is the petrol price that has risen so high and the repair costs [too],” Motshabang told a journalist at SABTA’s *Taxi* magazine.³³⁹ Was it a coincidence that RTA77 coincided with the United Nations Security Council’s call for strengthening its arms embargo against South Africa? “Attempts to impose a Security council mandatory oil embargo on South Africa failed,” Richard Goldstone explained in an essay

³³⁷ *Taxi*, September 1980.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

questioning the effects of economic sanctions against apartheid South Africa.³⁴⁰

“However, in 1973 the Arab States decided to impose such an embargo. The embargo was strengthened by the decision of Iran, in 1979, to sever diplomatic relations with South Africa,” Goldstone continued.³⁴¹ “These were effective oil sanctions that South Africa was forced to evade at high financial loss.”³⁴² Indeed, “Resolution 418” was limited to weapons.³⁴³ However, it’s reasonable to assume that troubling the apartheid government’s deep investments in arms might force the country’s hand to raise revenue other ways, particularly in industries like petrol, which is closely tied to arms.³⁴⁴

What role did the political economy of the late 1970s and 1980s play in the lives of some of the earliest taxi owners in South Africa during the time Meshack Khosa named the “repression epoch?”³⁴⁵ Whether or not economic sanctions was successful in ending apartheid, few have explored whether or not cutting off access to cheap oil and resources for vehicle manufacturing forced the taxi industry to develop the way it did after the Soweto Uprising. What if the taxi industry was successful precisely because South Africa’s hegemonic industries suffered from embargos? What if black taxi operators were the first group in South Africa to successfully capitalize on the emerging

³⁴⁰ Richard J. Goldstone, "The Role of Economic Sanctions in Deterring Serious Human Rights Violations: South Africa, Iraq and Darfur," in *Confronting Genocide*, ed. René Provost and Payam Akhavan (Heidelberg: Springer, 2011).

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ “[The Security Council] decides that all States shall cease forthwith any provision to South Africa of arms or related *materiel* of all types, including the sale or transfer of weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary police equipment, and spare parts for the aforementioned, and shall cease as well the provision of all types of equipment and supplies and grants of licensing arrangements for the manufacture or maintenance of the aforementioned.”

³⁴⁴ Dennis and Urry, *After the Car*, 14-19.

³⁴⁵ Khosa, "Changing State Policy and the Black Taxi Industry in Soweto."

neoliberal political economy in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution? Whatever the case, the taxi industry press was unconcerned with the world at large, but rather in the minutiae of taxi operators' lives.

This section reviewed some of the life histories collected in the taxi press as a way to unsettle the dominant taxi story. Published between 1980 and 1985, *Taxi* bragged about the partnerships the taxi industry built with the automotive industry before the legalization of the 16-passenger minibus taxi – the form of transport we see today in 2014. In its formative years, the taxi industry's partnerships with Shell, Nissan, Mobil and others tied some black elites in South Africa to global capitalism and at a critical stage in the development of neoliberalism.

Yet *Taxi* and the other taxi newspapers were all part of an apartheid archive. They were black newspapers, yes, but they were never banned. In many ways, the papers divorced themselves from politics so that they could survive. As John Sibley Butler explained of a different context, the most successful black businesses in the United States during slavery not only abstained from taking a side in the slavery debate, but at times denounced abolition.³⁴⁶ Similarly, whoever read the papers during high apartheid very well could have seen the black taxi industry during the repression epoch as a model of separate development and a success of apartheid. Thus, it was impossible for the papers to take up a radical black ethos and preferable for them to be apolitical. At the same time, the editors genuinely praised the taxi industry as a successful model of black capitalism. And they held on to that success to narrate the histories of the different men and women

³⁴⁶ John S. Butler, *Entrepreneurship and Self-Help among Black Americans: A Reconsideration of Race and Economics*, ed. Inc NetLibrary (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 75-76.

involved in the industry over the 20th century. How did *Taxi* strike that balance between valorizing the taxi industry as a black capitalist venture, but as something that would not challenge apartheid?

Black Taxi Capitalism in the Lives of Paradise Mahlangu and James Chapman

“Let me tell you, the sad part of it is that the people who played a very, very significant role in the taxi industry, some are gone and forgotten, gone and forgotten, and that’s very bad.” –Paradise Mahlangu³⁴⁷

While most of the personal testimonies in *Drive On* and *Taxi* portrayed SABTA and its drive to get bigger and better taxis for owners positively, ones that considered the taxi wars within the context of the BTR vacillated between praising the taxi’s history to questioning its history because so many died in the wars. This section narrativizes the taxi story through two interviews I conducted with Paradise Mahlangu and James Chapman.³⁴⁸ As the former SABTA President and one of SABTA’s chief advisors, the two men were some of the lucky ones who lived long enough to sit down with me and share their experiences in the taxi industry. Together, Paradise and James’ intertwined stories illuminate the ways men in the taxi business built relationships out of fraternity and mutual dissatisfaction with the state of dispossessed and displaced black South Africa. It is important to illustrate that James is white and Paradise black because both saw their relationship as challenging apartheid segregation. Like the Deputy Minister of Transport Meyer, SABTA conferred on James an honorary Zulu status for his work with

³⁴⁷ Paradise Mahlangu (retired President, Southern African Black Taxi Association), interviewed by Elliot James, January 23, 2014.

³⁴⁸ In order to make the section more readable, I have included the quotations from my separate interviews with Paradise and James without footnoting and citing each one.

the taxi industry. Born in on a farm in Boschkop, outside of Pretoria, Mahlangu was one of a small percentage of black South Africans who were not immediately forced into doing mine work. While Mahlangu and his peers witnessed the growth of commercial vehicles in their own working lifetimes, the majority of rural black South African mineworkers saw trains as the dominant transport force in their lives, even if they were too poor to take them, and had to walk hundreds of kilometers from their homesteads all over the country to the in the Johannesburg area. Thus, while Paradise and James had different racial backgrounds, their relative privilege allowed them to build a friendship, and their collective biographies mirror some of the experience some of the most successful taxi entrepreneurs followed in the BTR.

While it was clear that taxis provided a service, James Chapman's partners in the industry demonstrated deeper concerns about maintaining their personal livelihoods in such a demanding business. He would not have been able to witness the taximen's needs from a distance. "A completely new world opened [when I] plucked up the courage [and] went to the rank," James explained. By building a business relationship based on fraternity, rather than economic interests alone, James learned about the industry and eventually got involved. James asked the taximen what they needed to jump start the business relationship. "You tell me what you require from me," James told them, "and I will try to meet that requirement." James was surprised by their response. "First of all," the taximen replied, "we need a toilet." James told the story to demonstrate the significance of sanitation in the basic everyday operations of a taxi business. "Realize that there were no toilet facilities being done," James told me. "You couldn't use anybody's toilet then because there were white toilets and black toilets."

Gas prices concerned the drivers much less than their personal livelihoods. The taximen also asked for help reaching their families if personal issues arose, James told me. “We put in a message service,” James explained, “[so] if there was a problem at the house and the home, they would be able to phone the wives or the daughters and the children.” James explained the process: “I would take the message down,” James told me, “then send it to the rank so that this guy would now know that there’s something wrong at home and you got to hightail it home to go and resolve any problem that he may have.”

Once the taximen’s personal matters were settled, they finally asked James to provide a meeting space as well as his business expertise. “The last thing they asked,” James told me, “was the most life changing for me.” With sanitation, a method of keeping contact with families, and a place to rest and congregate out of the beating sun, James was ready to build a business partnership with the taximen at Pelemu Station. “Would you mind joining our executive team,” they asked, “and giving us a little advice on the way forward?” The new relationship increased James’ fuel business tenfold. “We grew from there,” James explained.

James’ new business relationship at Pelemu Station and the nearby taxi rank was only the beginning of his 50-year involvement in the taxi industry. “This is a giant industry,” James explained. He saw the merger of gas and transport at Pelemu as the perfect time to begin thinking bigger about the industry’s possibilities. “What are we doing with this industry [to grow it],” James asked? “Are we getting discounts? Are we getting finance for these vehicles?” The old vehicles the taximen used to do business were another issue. “At the time that I got involved the guys were driving old [Chevrolet]

Valiant vehicles that were all second-hand,” James explained. “I thought,” James continued, “why can’t we turn this into an industry where they buy new vehicles?”

James told me that township residents’ frustrations with the subsidized bus system was the impetus for the taxi industry to grow. “The taxis were already around by then,” James explained, “but they were small in number, they were highly expensive, and they would only [have] one, two people to a vehicle.” The turning point in the taxi’s development was when transport became a political issue in the 1950s and 1960s – when it became a “black” issue. “I think the boycott of buses in Alexandra was the bravest spur that told all people,” James recounted, “Why can’t we move people ourselves?” From then on James helped his new partners petition for larger vehicles.

The ability to use 8-seat vehicles instead of 4-seaters “changed the entire economy of pay taxis,” James explained. “Suddenly you had a sort of bread and butter type business that would double its income and attain its cost, nearly at cost,” he continued. Larger taxis benefitted taxi operators and the economy at large. “Government was helping to get [more taxi] licenses because they wanted to move workers,” James explained. “We approached government again,” James recounted, “Can we go to 12-seaters? And then we went to 16-seaters,” James continued. As taxis grew in size, taxis also grew in number, rivaling even the bus system. “Now, you could imagine the economies that you get out of that,” James explained. “From a 4-seater vehicle [with a] heavy big old engine to a 16-seater vehicle,” James said, and in under only a couple of decades.

Getting financed for newer and better vehicles became more important because the busiest operators ran their taxis into the ground within a couple years. “That was the

second evolution in my mind in the taxi industry,” James said of financing. “Not only do you have a good business because there are enough people to drive and you could fit enough [passengers] in your vehicle,” James continued, “now you are able to gear your business with funds from the banks.”

With increasing size, numbers, and momentum, James witnessed the taxi industry come into its own, and become poised to grow well into the future. “Unfortunately, when the politics took over South Africa,” James concluded, “it was like everything was political. James saw South Africa’s preparations for a regime change supersede good economic practice. “The structure of the industry fell apart and the guys started killing each other,” James lamented. “Then it had all fell apart and it had to be restarted again.” The taxi revolution ended at the moment of the transition from apartheid.

If politics constrained economic growth, I asked James what the taxi industry should look to in order to build itself up again. “Its primary income must remain the moving of people from A to B,” James answered. Everything else follows – government support, discounts from the automakers, finance from the banks. “It must remain a mover of people,” James concluded. For James, *Sithutha Isizwe* has great value.

Organizing the taxi industry in the 1970s and 80s required James to take on a role as a white ally with privilege. “Just remember, when we started, South Africa was a different place,” James told me before introducing me to Paradise Mahlangu.³⁴⁹ “We were not allowed to visit each other,” James told me, gesturing to Paradise. “He could not come to my home, I could not go to his home,” James continued, “and if I went to his

³⁴⁹ James Chapman (Managing Director, TaxiChoice), in conversation with Elliot James and Paradise Mahlangu, January 23, 2014.

home, I would be arrested.” Segregation made their quest to build new taxi alliances a particular challenge. “We weren’t allowed to eat in restaurants, so when we went around the country,” James told me, “I could have to go in and do the buying, and we’d all have to sit in the car and eat.” James gestured to Paradise again before Paradise and I met further to discuss his experiences.

Paradise also remembered the moment James advocated for the group in great detail. “That was in Woodsprite Hotel,” Paradise later told me. “We couldn’t sleep there, and we couldn’t eat there,” he recounted. “We were hungry, and they said, ‘Oh no, guys, look’,” Paradise explained. “James went in [and] tried to negotiated, and they said,” Paradise recalled, “No, no, no, it will be against the law to allow black people to sleep in here, even to eat in here.” Even the food prepared was meant for white mouths only. “It was a problem,” Paradise concluded. “He’ll tell you, sometimes where we did stuff like that,” James continued, “so it was a different place, a different time.” James left us before telling me how significant my meeting with Paradise was. “Paradise is the Mandela of the taxi industry,” James said.

Paradise told me he began working in the taxi industry after working a number of other odd jobs. Born in Boschkop in Pretoria, Paradise’s first job was on a cattle farm in 1957. Paradise finished standard six with a junior certificate before taking a job with a bakery in Pretoria. “I started with Kamba Bakery,” Paradise explained, “and then went to Kamba Excelsior Bakery, Pretoria, as a salesman.” In 1971 Paradise decided to supplement his income by driving a taxi. “I was earning almost nothing,” Paradise explained, “seven rand a week as a driver by the way.” Paradise joined the taxi industry as a driver, beneath the rank of owner or owner-driver. “The license, the permit was not

mine,” Paradise explained, “I had to get it from somebody on a rental basis.” Paradise worked in the rank close to Pelemu Station, James’ business. “James Chapman was very friendly to me,” Paradise remembered. “He had a filling station, then he offered us an office, a small office.” The space James provided allowed Paradise and his colleagues to better organize their business activities. “It was when the taxi industry was getting united,” Paradise told me, “because we were scattered at the time.”

James and Paradise used their fraternity as a model to build their business partnership. “Each town had its own associations,” Paradise explained, “then [James and I] came up with the idea of bringing the taxi industry together, all the associations together.” James, Paradise, and the taximen at the rank by Pelemu Station were challenged to launch their plan because of Pretoria’s vast area and conservative politics. “At the time, we had four provinces,” Paradise told me, “and we worked very hard to bring associations together.”

Building a larger taxi body required new delegations of taximen. Paradise gave me one example. “James helped us, the people from the township [defeat] Section 10 of the [1977] Act,” Paradise explained. The law restricted “black” taxis from operating in the center of Pretoria. “Only people in Mamelodi with the taxis could trade in the CBD,” Paradise explained. Restricting the Pretoria taxi trade to one township privileged Mamelodi taxis from others, and caused divisions in the industry, and possibly even a logistic nightmare with transfers. “Then we fought it,” Paradise explained, “then we formed our own [association] after winning the battle around Pretoria.”³⁵⁰ Interjecting, Paradise told me that there was already a powerful taxi association in the area: the

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

Pretoria and District Non-European Taxi Association. “We had to call it PADNETA,” Paradise explained. “It was led by Indians,” Paradise remembered. “The Lead chap was an Indian.”

There were no “black” leaders in the local association PADNETA, and only PADNETA could trade in Pretoria’s city core. But after the Pretoria battle, Paradise and his colleagues founded PUTA, the Pretoria United Taxi Association. Before Pretoria, “we blacks had no right to lead in the taxi industry,” Paradise explained. With PUTA, however, “we started a new organization which embraced everyone.” Paradise was elected PUTA’s founding chairperson. SABTA emerged as PUTA expanded beyond Pretoria and built alliances throughout the province. “Then we started our own provincial organization, Transworld Taxi Association [or] TTA,” Paradise explained. “Each province formed its own alliance or federation, sort of,” Paradise continued, “then, from there, we formed the mother body, SABTA, the South African Black Taxi Association.”

Paradise and his colleagues drove or flew long-distances to bring the different taxi associations under a single umbrella body. “We would drive even more than 600 kilometers to reach those people,” Paradise explained, “and people did not understand what we were trying to do.” In addition to explaining the purpose of an umbrella taxi association, Paradise assuaged taximen’s concerns about taking on the buses and trains. “One of our competitors, Transnet,” Paradise explained, “had the railway police [on their side].” In the face of state-sanctioned competition and restrictions on black business, taxis were on their own. Paradise told me he would say the following to the taxi operators he met around the country: “We cannot help you [beat the competitors] unless we are organized,” Paradise explained. “Let us get this whole thing organized [and] then we can

win the battle.” For a business fueled by individual ambitions, Paradise struggled to convince taxi operators the value of cooperation.

Paradise told me that he ran his taxi business with very few problems during the time Meshack Khosa called the era of repression, before the 1977 act legalized vehicles larger than sedans as taxis. “Apartheid,” Paradise explained, “was the order of the day. We were used to the oppression, and we lived under the oppressions.” The privilege of earning an independent wage gave taximen much more flexible lives than many others living in the same townships. “Funny, we could not feel as oppressed, as the other people were more oppressed,” Paradise explained. “At least we enjoyed our business.” Once an operator had a license, even if it was a rental, taxis faced very little persecution. “Let me tell you,” Paradise explained, “when the police catch you [overloading, for example], they would give you a spot fine.” The police would throw the driver in jail if they could not pay the fine outright. “Very bad [sure],” Paradise conceded, “but we were used to it, and we always had a hope that one day it will be all right. Yes.”

Paradise explained that the taxi business improved greatly after SABTA formed. “People got some training,” Paradise explained, “people got civilized, more civilized.” SABTA gave the taxi industry a voice and perspective on the business beyond the individual vehicle or small fleet. “People got to understand the taxi industry better,” Paradise continued, “they got to understand the politics of the country better, and people started to make money because SABTA was now lobbying for them.” With a better understanding and demonstration of their worth within the value chain of public transport, leaders in the taxi industry sought allegiances beyond ridership’s base human capital. “We had some companies, big companies, sponsoring us, donating to us,”

Paradise explained. “We had anchor companies which even donated to our [national] conferences, trainings, and whatever,” Paradise concluded. “Yes, it was beautiful.”

The hard-won laws governing the taxi industry ensured its success, and for the long run, it seemed. “At the time the taxi industry was regulated,” Paradise explained, “there was order, a lot of order, which we liked.” The laws that determined the physical fitness of vehicles, who could and could not operate on roads; all of these regulations ensured that the right drivers got paid for the taxi services they provided. These laws distinguished the taxi revolution from the previous age of repression and the end of apartheid. Even while transport violence persisted throughout the entire 20th century, taxi entrepreneurs counted on these laws to protect their business interests despite the risk of physical harm.

The laws limiting the number of taxi drivers on the roads distinguished the 1970s and 1980s from other periods in the taxi’s history. “Today’s taxi industry is not like the taxi industry we were in because it was regulated,” Paradise explained. “You wouldn’t find one person having 40 taxis. No, it was regulated.” Removing the laws was part of the apartheid government’s plan to make the industry unviable for the ANC, Paradise postulated. “The problem started when they deregulated the taxi industry,” Paradise explained. “Then the taxi industry was deregulated, then the business was saturated, it was over-flooded.” While previous laws carefully monitored competition to keep the business interests civil, deregulation created the conditions for the taxi wars. “There was no business anymore,” Paradise explained, “hence, people started fighting.” The taxi wars, in turn, created the conditions for today’s taxi industry under the ANC. “We did advise the white regime,” Paradise explained. “Guys, don’t deregulate the taxi industry,”

Paradise and the SABTA leadership told the minister of transport at the time. “Chaos will come.”

The changing tide of South Africa’s white minority rule complicated the deregulation debate. “Possibly because of the politics, [apartheid] knew that they’ve got nothing to lose because the ANC will seek to finish,” Paradise concluded. “ANC government must seek to finish how they govern the taxi industry because [apartheid] made it to be ungovernable.”

The business relationships that the taxi industry built with the government disintegrated further after deregulation. “When the ANC government came in, it didn’t work with the taxi industry and the leadership which was there,” Paradise explained. Ignoring the hard work the SABTA executives did to foster relationships with white government and industry also created a new fault line. “They started their own taxi organizations which started fighting the existing taxi industry,” Paradise explained. “They took over the power from SABTA and started SALDTA and the NAFTO.” The organization put new titles and rival governing structures to the deepening fault lines between the ANC and SABTA, which lost all purchase as an organization in the late 1990s. “That messed up the taxi industry completely,” Paradise concluded.

The fraught relationship between SABTA and the ANC defined Paradise’s presidency in the association’s culminating years. “ANC coming into power did not understand our approach to the change,” Paradise explained. “They said, ‘no, no, no, we cannot work with [SABTA] because their organization has been working with the regime, so we must start our own taxi industries’.” Rumors of the taxi industry’s “collaboration” with the apartheid regime peaked when Paradise and the SABTA

President he succeeded, James Ngcoya, traveled to the United States Congress in Washington, DC and the United Nations headquarters in New York City in 1987 to challenge sanctions against apartheid. “When sanctions were imposed to South Africa, we had a very serious problem because we’re losing customers because people were out of jobs,” Paradise told me. “We said, ‘no, we are not against sanctions’,” Paradise continued, “[but] the sanctions must be targeted at the right target, not targeted at us because, once people lose a job, people are going to suffer’.” Lobbying against sanctions hurt the credibility of Ngcoya and SABTA in the eyes of the global anti-apartheid movement. “They said he was bought by the apartheid regime to say those words,” Paradise concluded, “and, yet, no, he was representing all of us.”

The taxi wars (which I will discuss in the next chapter) cast an even darker shadow on the challenges SABTA faced in the late 1990, forever damaging the industry’s value for the public good. “People started killing one another, hating one another, fighting one another,” Paradise explained, “then, unfortunately, I also left.” SABTA’s last leaders worked in isolation of the government, just as new entities like the Goldstone Commission and the National Taxi Task Team commissioned new studies to revamp the taxi industry. These government entities changed the focus of SABTA’s individual black business ethos to one more bureaucratic. “The ANC government did not understand the modus operandi of the taxi industry,” Paradise explained. “One would come with this suggestion, and the other with this suggestion, and the TTTA [did] whatever they wanted,” Paradise concluded. “They did not understand because they were new in the game, you see?”

The consistent revitalizing and revamping of the stories that made the taxi industry made its recent pasts seem irrelevant. As the taxi industry progressed under different national political structures, those at the helm in the industry ignored its veterans. “Funny enough, with the new order, the new dispensation, when these taxi organizations were formed,” Paradise lamented, “you found that SABTA leadership [was] way in front of all of it because they are the people with more experience in the industry.” Honoring the entrepreneurs who came before him was an essential part of achieving success as a young taximen, Paradise believed. “When I came into the taxi industry, I found that there were people who were long[-time taximen] because the industry started in 1930,” Paradise explained, referencing the Motor Carrier Transportation Act of the same year.³⁵¹ “There were people already there in 1930,” Paradise continued, “but even in the new order after 1994, you found the SABTA people in the forefront of each and every mother body of the taxi industry.”³⁵²

After SABTA published its last issue of *Drive On* in 1991, media giant Times Media bought rights to distribute the paper under a new name: *Taxi Talk*. Outside of the transformations that would take place on a national scale (the subject of the next chapter), the varying national bodies representing taxis all over the country began restructuring,

³⁵¹ “The 1930 act prohibited all transport of goods or persons for reward,” McCaul explained, “unless authorization had been obtained from the National Transport Commission (NTC) and the local road transportation boards (LRTBs) which it established to issue motor carrier certificates.” Before 1930 urban municipalities controlled transport like motor taxis and horse-drawn carriages. Except for cities like Cape Town, McCaul explains, “there was almost no road transportation to speak of at the beginning of the century and also little competition between road and rail.” South Africa created more widespread regulations when railroads complained that taxis, but mostly buses, were eating into their profits. Colleen McCaul, *No Easy Ride* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations), 36-37.

³⁵² Mahlangu, interview.

merging, and sometimes disbanding as the country prepared a changing of the guard from the NP to the ANC. SABTA soon joined with SALDTA entities to make the South African National Taxi Cooperation. Combining forces with the government to create SANTACO healed the rift between SABTA and the ANC. “The ANC said,” Paradise recounted, “‘Guys, come in’, and this one’s now coming to greet me.”³⁵³ Yet Paradise also had fond memories of the original taxi association, before 1994, and before the taxi wars. “SABTA was great,” Paradise remembered, “it really was great.”³⁵⁴ So great that SANTACO eventually hired former SABTA members into leadership positions. One can only wonder how distinct SANTACO’s governing structures are from SABTA’s when they employed the same executives.

Conclusion

This chapter illuminated both the substance and intellectual currents undergirding South Africa’s shared minibus taxi industry in black people’s struggle to regain property, finance, and access to capital, using the overtly racist context of apartheid in South Africa as the exemplar of the ways dispossession and displacement indeed played a role in black capitalist uplift program. Central to the taxi industry’s program to build an institution which could reverse the gross injustices black and indigenous South Africans experienced as the colonial and apartheid states built neighborhoods to house and roads to transport commuters. From SABTA’s “mouthpiece” newspaper *Drive On*’s depictions of entrepreneurial men, women, and families, to van Onselen’s story of black and white

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

cab drivers in South Africa's industrial mecca, Johannesburg, this chapter presented a wide variety of perspectives and intellectual traditions from different historical contexts across the Atlantic to show how race, ethnicity, class, and gender all played important roles in the ability of hundreds of black South Africans to use the tenets of capitalism to make lives better for their children.

This section argued that the shared minibus taxi industry in the years following the Road Transportation Act of 1977/8 believed their commitments to capitalism for black people would benefit the masses. Through the press they published and circulated, SABTA published *Taxi* and *Drive On*, which extolled the lives of black men and women who had made it in the black taxi industry. While the substance life histories reviewed importantly illuminated a vibrant yet complex world of dispossessed and displaced men and women trying to make ends meet in cities and a country that deemed them as fourth-class citizens, SABTA's work, when understood in historical and global perspective, was nothing new.

Taxi and *Drive On*'s features of black taxi life fits squarely within a genealogy of 20th century thought concerning black business, which became popular just as the first taxi companies in South Africa were struggling to get their white drivers licenses alongside other jitney drivers. Putting the black taxi industry's capitalist ethos in global perspective sheds new light on how the philosophies of Marcus Garvey and Booker T. Washington were applied in Africa, through osmosis rather than in reading and debate. Featuring the pre-history of black taxi capitalist thought of the early 20th century alongside the forces of dispossession and displacement that swept over South Africa through the very establishment of the Union of South Africa puts the shared minibus

taxi's history of replacement and repossession in a historical context that witnessed black capitalism gaining currency from the United States, the Caribbean, and Europe, all the way to South Africa, in rural schoolhouses where progressive, Christian women and men sought to give black youth the skills to make the most of life in a racist world that built its infrastructure on the dispossession and displacement of their parents and grandparents. In so doing, the chapter used scholarship to dramatize how philosophies and historical narratives of repossession and replacement traveled across vastly different spaces that shared the same anti-black aims.

The next chapter picks up on the role of capitalism in the age of neoliberalism (1980-present) played in the transformation of the taxi industry over the last decade of apartheid South Africa. While the importance Garvey and SABTA placed on sexual and social reproduction of black families would lay the foundation for the heterosexual and patriarchal character taxi capitalism would continue to rearticulate to make sense of itself as the BTR unfolded over the late 1970s and early 1980s, neoliberalism would transform the character of black uplift in the taxi industry to one which would contribute to the ANC's anti-apartheid nationalism. Unlike black capitalism, anything anathema to the reproduction of black people (and their ability to grow human, economic, and political resources) under neoliberal economic, social, and political values would be cast as particularly abominable. Thus, the pre-history of the shared minibus taxi before neoliberalism became an indomitable intellectual force in the 1990s in this chapter will look that different as the following two chapters continue to expose the influences of capitalism, nationalism, and heterosexual patriarchy in the alliances the taxi industry built with global neoliberal capitalism. Together, chapters 4, 5, and 6 interrogate the extent to

which the shared minibus taxi's history of black capitalism and economic uplift provides sufficient lessons for iterations of "black" business in our present moment of neoliberalism.

CHAPTER FIVE: Taxis in the World of Neoliberalism and Post-Apartheid South Africa,
1990-2000

Introduction: Taxi Wars and Apartheid's End in the Neoliberal World Order

In 1983, Groblersdal, a white neighborhood buttressed between two homelands and a township in the Northern Transvaal, built a 1.8 million-Rand taxi rank on the town's eastern border so that licensed taxi operators could bring dispossessed and displaced rural and urban black South Africans to and from town for fares. Since Groblersdal was the only city in the area that could provide jobs, the town built the rank to accommodate the growing number of black South Africans in the surrounding area who worked in town as well as the men and women who taxied them. By this time, minibus taxis were well integrated with existing forms of transport, including buses, private cars, and trains, but also seemed to capture a significant proportion of short-distance commuters.³⁵⁵ While the existing taxi associations – those groups whose members were licensed and registered with the LRTB – saw the new rank as an opportunity to grow their businesses, taxi operators who had historically been barred from getting licenses saw the new rank as an affront to the informal ways licensed and

³⁵⁵ One Presidential committee on urbanization estimated that there were 2.1 million commuters who were classified as African in 1984 – nearly 10% of whom took taxis. For precise data, see McCaul, 21. However, the Surplus People's Project noted the trouble of gathering exact data. In 1983, for example, an estimated half a million black South Africans were under the "threat of removal" in the Transvaal province alone. More research needs to be conducted into the extent to which perpetually dispossessed and displaced people are able to take taxis. What growing numbers do suggest is that more taxis created more opportunities for eligible applicants to enter the taxi industry. Platzky and Walker, 11.

unlicensed operators had worked together on the different roads leading to Groblersdal.³⁵⁶ Shortly thereafter, a struggle ensued between different taxi associations over the new rank and the routes that took black commuters to town and back to their rural and urban ghettos. After several operators had been killed over the struggle, leaders of the informal and formal taxi associations sent representatives to the Goldstone Commission for Public Intimidation and Violence in the Taxi Industry 10 years into the struggle. When commissioners brought law enforcement and the taxi association leaders together, they learned that the tensions mirrored struggles throughout the country, which could be summed up as “transition violence,” which took on a character commonly recognized as “black-on-black violence.” While these struggles seem to be happening everywhere white officials gave out licenses and built infrastructure to accommodate the growing influence of minibus taxis in supplementing commercial vehicle revenue, before the Groblersdal taxis approached the Goldstone Commission, no one ever asked the question how South Africa’s apartheid geography contributed to what became known as the taxi wars. This chapter, therefore, illuminates how taxi operators’ struggle to grow capital in a country built on the dispossession and displacement of black South Africans erupted in struggle because apartheid favored whites driving cars over black commuters. And as the apartheid state’s began slowly conceding power to the different black political organizations and political parties growing in importance from the late 1980s to the early

³⁵⁶ In 1986 South Africans applying for taxi licenses in the Johannesburg-area alone were 1.5% likely to be granted one. And this was a record high. In 1987, they were 6% likely to be successful. That percentage rose to just over 14% in 1988. While rates varied throughout the country, fewer than 10% of applicants throughout the country could expect to be granted licenses. Dugard, *From Low-Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi Violence in South Africa, 1987-2000*, 4.

1990s, the Goldstone Commission’s inquiries into the roots of the taxi wars as well as its findings that the taxi wars were rooted in local politics illuminate yet another dimension of divided black politics. The taxi wars made clear the different stakes between taxis recognized by the state, and those operators barred from being licenses, who licensed taxi operators called “pirates.”

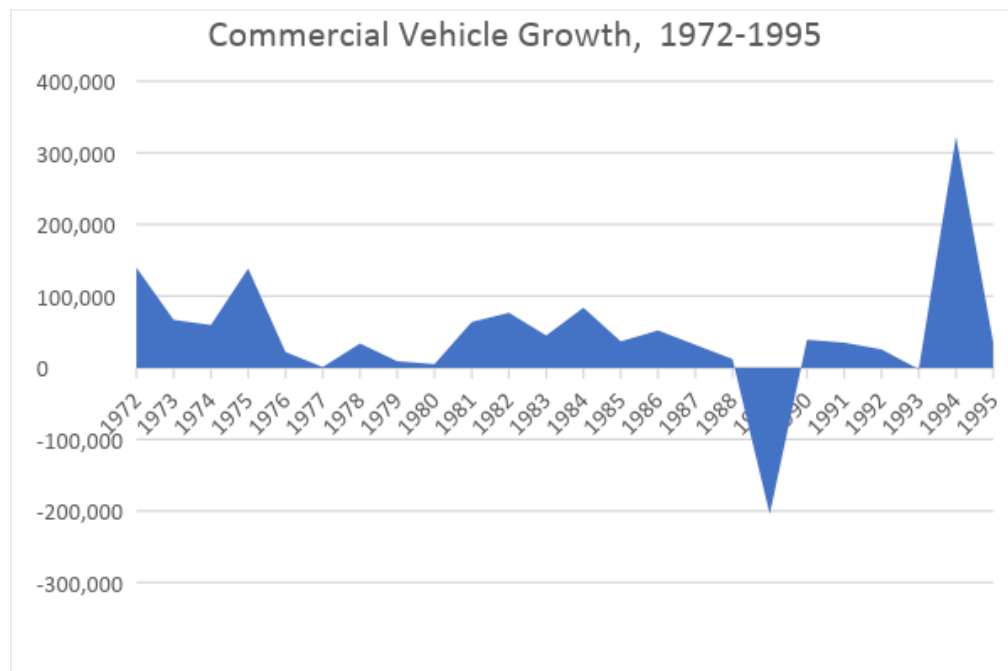


Figure 5.1 Nationwide Commercial Vehicle Growth, 1972-1995

The unprecedented commercial vehicle growth South Africa witnessed in 1972 and the years leading up to the 1976 Soweto Uprising and subsequent transformation in anti-apartheid politics would not be rivaled until the end of the apartheid regime in 1994 (Figure 5.1). Critical to the steady but slowed growth of the taxi industry in those ensuing years coincided with much greater recognition of shared minibus taxi transport within government and private sectors. Three critical and interrelated aspects of the early 1990s

profoundly transformed the character of the taxi industry from one waiting for transport laws to catch up to their activities, to one that began to increasingly shape what transport on South Africa's roads would look like, and have their efforts validated at the highest levels of transport governance and industry. The first was the dismantling of apartheid, which witnessed the creation of institutions that would oversee the transition from a social and political system designed to dispossess and displace the nation's majority population to one based on equity and reconciliation.³⁵⁷ The second were the taxi wars, which needed immediate attention lest the country would continue to see "violence and intimidation" cost lives, destabilize communities, and create an environment of pandemic "black-on-black" violence in the absence of white supremacist rule – that is, the very reasons the Afrikaner Nationalist Party attempt to wrest economic and political control of the country away from indigenous Southern Africans in the first place, creating "separate-ness" laws in their stead.³⁵⁸ The third was the African National Congress'

³⁵⁷ Many South Africans dispossessed and displaced during the apartheid regime questioned the ethics of big business' divestment in response to the global anti-apartheid movement's calls. "In the climate of the National Party's glasnost, companies, many with anxious boards of directors in London, New York and latterly 'exotic' places like Kuwait," Shamil Jeppie and Crain Soudien observed in 1990, "have discovered how besmirched their social responsibility programmes have been with the apartheid agenda, and are bending backwards to erase the past." Key to their complaints was how turn-of-the-decade calls for including dispossessed and displaced people in key decision-making activities made very little changes to existing networks of power, and, rather, helped the organizations complicit in the dispossession and displacement of many black South Africans, not the people themselves. "Hence terms such as the 'participation' and 'empowerment' of the political dispossessed have become the sesame key for earning credibility," Jeppie and Soudien continue, "and countless schemes are being negotiated in which communities are drawn into bi-party and tri-partite agreements with local government and the private sector." Jeppie, Soudien, and Committee, 14.

³⁵⁸ Similar representations of black people going mad and mismanaging states of affairs after "losing" white oversight was present in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1914) which depicted Reconstruction legislatures as infested with ape-like African American decisionmakers.

(ANC) adoption of neoliberalism, which would reintroduce South Africa into the very same economic and political world system that ostracized the apartheid nation. While the taxi industry had in the 1980s commanded the attention of government and big business, apartheid's dismantling, the taxi wars, and the neoliberal ANC, cumulatively, brought the taxi industry into a series of political transformations that softened its influence on black township communities on the one hand, and transport economic policy on the other. This chapter, thus, reveals the taxi industry's transformation from an opportune pathway to black capitalism, to one rife with conflict, as well as one under attack by the apartheid state, to one forced to realize the new political and economic climate of neoliberalism.

Making History Neoliberal in the Time of the Taxi Wars

In January 1990, the Southern African Black Taxi Association's newsletter *Drive On* published "SABTA: Looking Back," the first in a series of 5 articles showcasing the 110-year history of the minibus taxi industry. The series began with the story of the one of the shared minibus taxi's point-to-point transportation antecedents: horse-drawn carts. "By the late 1880s," *Drive On* wrote, "there were relatively few black [horse-drawn cart] cabbies plying their trade in Johannesburg."³⁵⁹ While Charles van Onselen discussed cabbies of varying ethnicities at length in a study almost a decade prior, "Looking Back" aimed to delve deeper into the black experience in the trade.³⁶⁰ Illuminating what they viewed a Golden Age of race-relations in the early transport industry, "the large majority of the black cabbies had a pre-dominantly black clientele," the article explained.³⁶¹

³⁵⁹ *Drive On* January 1990.

³⁶⁰ Charles Van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1982).

³⁶¹ *Drive On* January 1990.

“However,” *Drive On* continued, “they could also transport white passengers as restrictions had not yet been enforced.”³⁶² *Drive On* then went on to explain how racism began to quickly transform the trade. “By 1897 onward,” responding to strikingly multi-ethnic character of cabs and cabbies, “the Johannesburg Town Council enforced separate cabs for different races,” *Drive On* found.³⁶³ “The dominant attitude at the time was to consider blacks as ‘social pests’,” a notion which preceded both apartheid as well as the strain of Afrikaner nationalism that took hold in the aftermath of the South Africa War.³⁶⁴ “As such the ferrying of white passengers by black drivers was not welcome,” the article lamented.³⁶⁵ Further disenfranchising black involvement in the trade, the article explained, “the white community demanded that blacks should have their cab licenses confiscated.”³⁶⁶ The experiences of early, black, dispossessed and displaced taxi operators would serve as a lesson for operators after them, the article surmised. “Looking Back,” therefore, set the stage to dramatize the black taxi revolution for repossession and replacement throughout the pages of *Drive On*, which its editors decided would be the mouthpiece of the taxi industry, like that on a brass trumpet.

Shedding light on a history of antecedent, self-starting entrepreneurs who faced intensifying racial discrimination before the 1913 Native Land Act, SABTA intended for “Looking Back” to tell their own story of repossession and replacement in the face of

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, 2nd ed., expanded and updated (Charlottesville: Cape Town, South Africa: University of Virginia Press: Tafelberg, 2009); Leslie Witz, *Apartheid's Festival: Contesting South Africa's National Pasts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

³⁶⁵ *Drive On* January 1990.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

deep-seated and historical adversity. “Tracing the history of the black taxi industry is long overdue,” the editors observed.³⁶⁷ “Few, if any, dare to confront the daunting task of reconstructing the history of the black taxi industry, from the turn of the century through the present,” the editors contended, praising their own bravery.³⁶⁸ Refusing to be discouraged by the public’s ignorance of taxi history and researchers’ reluctance to study it, *Drive On* commissioned its own study. “Public archives are teeming with massive historical records,” the editors discovered.³⁶⁹ However, the challenge in telling the history was not for lack of archival material. The taxi industry lacked oral histories – or, rather, people who lived to tell the tale.³⁷⁰ SABTA blamed the taxi wars for destroying some of the most important taxi industry pioneers, who did not live long enough to tell their stories to “Looking Back.” Commenting on the violence that escalated as apartheid waned in the late 1980s, *Drive On* lamented, “unfortunately, some pioneers in the industry became victims of the taxi wars.”³⁷¹ *Drive On*’s “Looking Back” series, therefore, was meant to fill this scholarly void and foster a historical memory of black

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ *Drive On*’s rival publication *Taxi* published several oral histories with taxi operators a decade prior to “Looking Back,” in fact. Through obituaries, letters to the editor, celebrations of marriage, and profiles, both *Drive On* and *Taxi* contributed valuable information on swaths of taxi operators, men and women, born as early as [find date] and ‘plying routes for fares’ throughout the entire 20th century. Rather than signaling a call to collect more oral histories, the frequent profile of industry pioneer Jimmy Sojane, in fact, put a stop to prioritizing stories of individuals. When *Drive On* took the reins of publicizing the taxi industry in 1985, collectives’ voices proliferated. Indeed, the ‘popularization’ of academic history seeped even into the taxi industry’s memory/history-making activities. “Looking Back” comes out of this history just as SABTA aims to propel it forward through the country’s transition out of apartheid. In so doing, the *Sithutha Isizwe* slogan became central.

³⁷¹ *Drive On* January 1990.

repossession and replacement in the taxi industry just as South Africa was transitioning out of apartheid.

In many ways, the scholarship on taxis being conducted by black *Drive On* journalists at taxi ranks and white scholars like Colleen McCaul at the South African Institute for Race Relation flourished in this time of the taxi wars. “Several [taxi pioneers] are still alive,” *Drive On* claimed, joyously.³⁷² “And they need to be identified and their oral histories recorded.”³⁷³ In so doing, the article surmised, “generations to come will be proud to read the epic and fascinating saga of this small fish (taxi) which ate the big fish (buses and trains) and revolutionized transport in the 1980s.”³⁷⁴ Preceding the release of Nelson Mandela from prison by one month, “Looking Back” was the taxi industry’s first opportunity to make its substantive claim to the revolution at hand. This was their footnote to the history books.

While it’s true that the story of immigrant men transporting fare-paying passengers in jitneys goes all the way back to South Africa’s industrial revolution, just as “Looking Back” suggested with its analytical timeline from 1880 to 1990, the story of the 16-passenger minibus taxi that propelled SABTA into History really began as the post-WWII North and South bent to the wills of global neoliberal economic policies.³⁷⁵ While in common use years prior, the Department of Transport only legalized minibus taxis as jitneys in 1986, and SABTA celebrated the transition from 4-8 seater taxis to ones legally

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ For the newest work on neoliberalism and transport in African History in the case of Tanzania, see Rizzo, *Taken for a Ride: Grounding Neoliberalism, Precarious Labour, and Public Transport in an African Metropolis*.

carrying 16 passengers in their press.³⁷⁶ While Datsun's E-20 Ekonobus represented the growth in terms of black bodies, Ford's ad used images of white families to demonstrate the same ability for larger vehicles to carry more people.

The image shows a newspaper advertisement for the Ford Husky minibus. The main headline reads "NEW FORD HUSKY THE BUS YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR". Below this, there is a large photograph of a red Ford Husky minibus with its side door open. To the left of the bus, a family of five (a man, a woman, and three children) are standing together. Above them is a circular graphic that says "CATCH THIS BUS!". The ad includes several columns of text, including a headline "Drive-On WOMAN DISCIPLINE AND PROGRAMME YOURSELF", a sub-headline "SARTA MAMA'S", and a section titled "LET DEMOCRACY BE OUR GUIDELINE". At the bottom, there is a small section titled "I want a 15 + 1 licence".

Figure 5.2 "New Ford Husky: The Bus You've Been Waiting For"

The truncated timeline did not take away much from the remarkable story of the minibus taxi's growth, however. In just under 10 years, minibuses eclipsed their rivals in the bus and rail transport industries in revenue and ridership (Figure 5.2). Shortly thereafter, minibus taxis would single-handedly shape how South Africa's cities would manage their most important infrastructural resource: the road. The story of the proverbial small fish eating the big fish would be the subject of dissertations, scholarly

³⁷⁶ Colleen McCaul, *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1990).

articles, and public opinion pieces from the time of the “Looking Back” article on.³⁷⁷

While the dearth of living informants propelled the editors of *Drive On* to conduct oral histories with those who remained, scholars from the outside wrote on the taxi industry for the same reasons SABTA did: because people were dying. Unlike almost anything else at the time, the story of the taxi wars exposed and even exemplified the violence in the shadow of the “peaceful” negotiations between F.W. De Klerk and Mandela. As apartheid was being overturned, the discovery of the possibilities inherent in this story and what the solution to the taxi problem represented became the barometer of success in the political transition. Central to re-narrativizing the taxi story was the demand for oral histories of taxi drivers and owners, for the purpose of re-claiming a sort of taxi humanity.³⁷⁸

“Looking Back,” then, was part of an attempt to undo the bitter legacy of the taxi wars and quell a particular class of taxi entrepreneurs’ anxieties about being forgotten in the upswing of political change. 1990 did not just mark a moment when people in and outside the taxi industry began publishing on minibuses. This was also the year when the taxi industry kicked their public relations machine into high gear in order to combat its poor reputation amongst the same commuters who would soon have the power of the

³⁷⁷ Dugard, "Drive On? An Analysis of the Deregulation of the South African Taxi Industry and the Emergence of the Subsequent "Taxi Wars" "; Khosa, "Capital Accumulation, the Apartheid State and the Rise of the Black Taxi Industry in Johannesburg and Soweto, 1930-1990."; Joel Barolsky, "Black Taxi Case Study," (Johannesburg: Wits Business School, 1989); *The Black Taxi Industry: Origins and Structure* (Johannesburg: Wits Business School, 1990).

³⁷⁸ The proliferation of autobiography was central, too, in ANC nationalism and social history. See Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rasool, "Orality, Memory, and Social History in South Africa," in *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, ed. Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

ballot. In collaboration with the thought-leaders of the time, taxis' public relations teams were responsible for shaping how the industry *should* be remembered after the De Klerk-Mandela negotiations. "Looking Back" endeavored to mechanize the historical record and use academic research to portray the leaders in the taxi industry as pioneers, successful businesspeople, and agents of the struggle. Thus, "Looking Back" reveals for historians today the extent to which the middle-class would go to ensure their favor in the eyes of the would-be political elite – the ANC. The following chapter, therefore, sheds light on a privileged group of black, middle-class entrepreneurs who endeavored to be remembered as capitalist heroes in the twilight of the apartheid regime.

The lengths to which taxi entrepreneurs went in South Africa's particularly violent 1990-1993 period have largely been lost to the taxi wars, which saw the demise of the industry's most successful entrepreneurs. As South Africa bent to international neoliberal economic policies, however, SABTA's executives attempted to recover this critical moment in the taxi industry's history. Their story was shaped out of a confluence of taxi war, post-apartheid transformation, and neoliberal narratives.

Rand Afrikaans University transport economic professor Peter Welgemoed's failed 1983 amendment to the 1977 Act to define had already signaled an important shift in the history of minibus taxis in South Africa – a shift that drastically reduced taxi entrepreneurs' influence in local and national transport policy and planning circles. From 1930 to 1983, black taxi drivers and owners had no say in laws regulating passenger transport just as the automobile transport economy grew out of the 1920s and the Great Depression South Africa bucked through dispossessing and displacing black people. Welgemoed attempted to give black taximen even less say in transport affairs by

scaffolding the country's bus monopolies power with an amendment that would reclassify taxis as buses, bringing taxis into the bus monopolies' network of influence at the very same moment taxis were carving out a space for their operations in a tumultuous political climate which witnessed students as part of the 1976 Soweto Uprising burning buses, which were symbolic of white supremacy. After Welgemoed's defeat, however, no transport legislative body would make any decisions about how South African's would be transported or transport themselves without "black voices," and there was none louder than the taxi industry's. In fact, Welgemoed was unable pass his amendment to classify minibus taxis as busses precisely because black taxi owners and drivers became organized under national bodies like the Southern African Black Taxi Association (SABTA), pushed back, caught the ear of transport administrators at the highest levels of government and industry, and fought to have the them take taxi operators' issues and concerns seriously.

As opposed to the decades prior to the 1990s, black taxi entrepreneurs did have some say in the reduction of their autonomy. But rather than completely cede their power and influence to the government, the taxi industry's most vocal authorities used the neoliberal tropes of entrepreneurship and the free market to re-narrativize how they wanted to be remembered under the new government. Taxi entrepreneurs were opposed, however, by the Goldstone Commission, which built onto the taxi wars' coverage in the popular press inquiry after inquiry into the violent Taxi Wars between rival taxi associations, which were occurring by the hundreds and in the shadow of peaceful negotiations between Mandela and F. W. de Klerk. In retaliation, SABTA used the press it created to tell the story about how respectable black taxi operators and their families,

against the backdrop of forced removals, already overcame apartheid in some sense by beating white, SATS-backed busses with black minibus taxis and by literally and figuratively re-appropriating the streets and ghettos that apartheid created to dispossess and displace black people. The next section contrasts and explores the opposing narratives of the taxi industry emerging more forcefully out of taxi entrepreneur and transition government circles, both of which could not have automatically assumed that the “new” South Africa would have emerged out of more democratic than violent means.

Narratives around the taxi wars, neoliberalism, and post-apartheid transformation have been so strong and influential since the end of apartheid, only a nuanced view with attention to the ways the taxi industry attempted to save face at the moment the taxi wars were at its height. But despite attempts to write nuance into their own history, taxis have since the 1970s been remembered as either heroes or villains in the eyes of the working-class, black commuting public.³⁷⁹ When the government allowed more spacious vehicles carrying sixteen passengers to operate legally as taxis in 1986, completely deregulated the taxi industry a year later, and precipitated the taxi wars in the process, the taxi press portrayed its women in the industry either as infinitely responsible and hardworking mothers. While their entrepreneurial activities, in theory, portrayed at least a small segment of the Transvaal provinces’ black dispossessed and displaced people as exemplars of the positive effect of relaxing the country’s historically restrictive policies for granting licenses under the 1977 Act. They argued that it was no coincidence that from 1986 on minibus taxis came to corner the transport marketplace in South Africa,

³⁷⁹ Barolsky, Khosa, McCaul all made sense of that contemporary moment through both the academic and popular understandings of social unrest in the 1970s and 1980s

almost entirely eclipsing trains and buses as vehicles transporting the majority of the country's urban workers. It was the combination of what they viewed as a waning apartheid regime and the success of radical black entrepreneurship that facilitated that boom. For them, that "revolutionary" change was inevitable, even if the end of apartheid wasn't.

As a result of the interplay between different taxi industry, media, and Goldstone Commission historical narratives, taxis seem to have appeared out of thin air, mythically appearing in 1976/77 to answer two questions social historians posed in the 1980s and 1990s: (1) what strategies did black people come up with to resist apartheid; (2) and what can these radicals teach South Africa as it transitions out of the apartheid period? What the literature on taxis in the 1990s could not predict, understandably, was a post-apartheid South Africa that failed to deliver social justice to the masses. But rather than writing a new history of the taxi to theorize that failure – something which Makubetse Sekhonyane and Jackie Dugard already accomplished in their report on the taxi wars – this chapter revisits the 1982-1992 moment now that doubts about the prospects of social change alongside economic development in the current (neoliberal) world order abound and the age of the automobile nears its end.³⁸⁰ Rather than reproduce the coterminous histories of taxis and struggle that the taxi industry itself promoted to prevent its eventual demise, this chapter, and my study more broadly, opens taxis up as a subject of historical inquiry in 21st century South Africa.

³⁸⁰ Makubetse Sekhonyane and Jackie Dugard, "The Taxi Industry and Government at Loggerheads: A Violent Legacy," *SA Crime Quarterly*, no. 10 (2004).

Throughout the 1940s-1970s, the apartheid state carefully controlled the organization of space, and the places where taxis could go and where they couldn't. In alliance in the black taxi owners, the industry became monopolies became closely controlled apartheid spaces, which served the interests of the states, but also served the interests of the taxi owners by preventing competitors. The reorganization of space was not only enforced by the power of the state, but also had vigilantes to protect their domain.³⁸¹ As the power of apartheid became to crumble, the intense controls over space grew to become the taxi wars in the 1980s and 1990s. With the dismantling of the state, and nominal reforms were being put in, this exacerbated the competition leading to the major taxi wars in the major 1990s. Since this was also the time of the intense political affiliation. With the dismantling apartheid, and the growth of the ANC, policies go from deregulation, which heightened competition, to regulation in late 1990s. Even though neoliberalism generally meant declining state intervention into the economy, it also meant a culture of individualism and profit marginalization.

Conditions Undergirding the Taxi Wars

“The taxi industry was the miracle of the 80s and the disaster of the 90s.” –Glen Santer³⁸²

While the collective memory of the taxi wars would fundamentally change how the taxi industry itself would be remembered as the country slowly dismantled apartheid institutions, various data sources and scholarly interpretations of that data disagree on

³⁸¹ Khosa, "Routes, Ranks and Rebels: Feuding in the Taxi Revolution."

³⁸² Mahlangu, interview.

what actually caused the various taxi wars as well as the timeline of the various conflicts throughout the country.³⁸³ Dugard placed the most violent wars in the country between 1987-1994. 1987 marked the year when South Africa's LRTBs drastically relaxed the standards for licensing taxi drivers, which allegedly prompted an immediate explosion in the number of black South Africans applying for taxi licenses. However, the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa (NAAMSA) estimated a steady growth of minibus taxis between 1979-1989, which disproves the important 1987/1988 axis on which Dugard's argument importantly relies. Moreover, when Minister of Transport Eli Louw released the numbers of successful taxi permit applicants, the public learned that standards for granting licenses remained strict throughout the 1980s, and up until the 1990s. In 1986, South Africans applying for taxi licenses in the Johannesburg area, for example, were 1.5% likely to be granted one. In 1987, they were 6% likely to be successful. That percentage rose to just over 14% in 1988.³⁸⁴

While the data does not immediately support Dugard's argument, concerns about the negative influence of put more licensed minibus taxis on the road was supported confirmed by the debate which ensued when the Welgemoed Commission proposed the policy of deregulation in its 1983 report. The neoliberal economic policy of

³⁸³ The Department of Bantu Affairs deliberately hid data on the numbers of forced removals and resettlements that occurred after the Group Areas Act. In a House of Assembly meeting in 1969, Deputy Minister of Bantu Affairs Dr. P. G. F. Koornhof refused to answer questions about the data they did have. For part of the transcript, see Cosmas Desmond, *The Discarded People: An Account of African Resettlement in South Africa* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), 224-27.

³⁸⁴ For detailed figures of the number of taxi permits issued as well as the market share of shared minibus taxis relative to buses and railroads in Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, East London, Kimberley, Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, Port Elizabeth, Potchefstroom, and Pretoria, see McCaul, 20-23.

“deregulation” defined the process of creating more opportunities for applicants to attain taxi licenses because rolling back government restrictions dictating who was unfit to drive passengers for fares theoretically fostered a free market of shared minibus taxi services. SABTA’s executives fiercely contested deregulation, fearing that eased licensure would flood the roads between towns, townships, and homelands with taxi drivers who had weak allegiances to existing associations. Since being increasingly established in the 1970s, black taxi capitalists leading the earliest associations were part of the very few who successfully applied for and attained licenses.

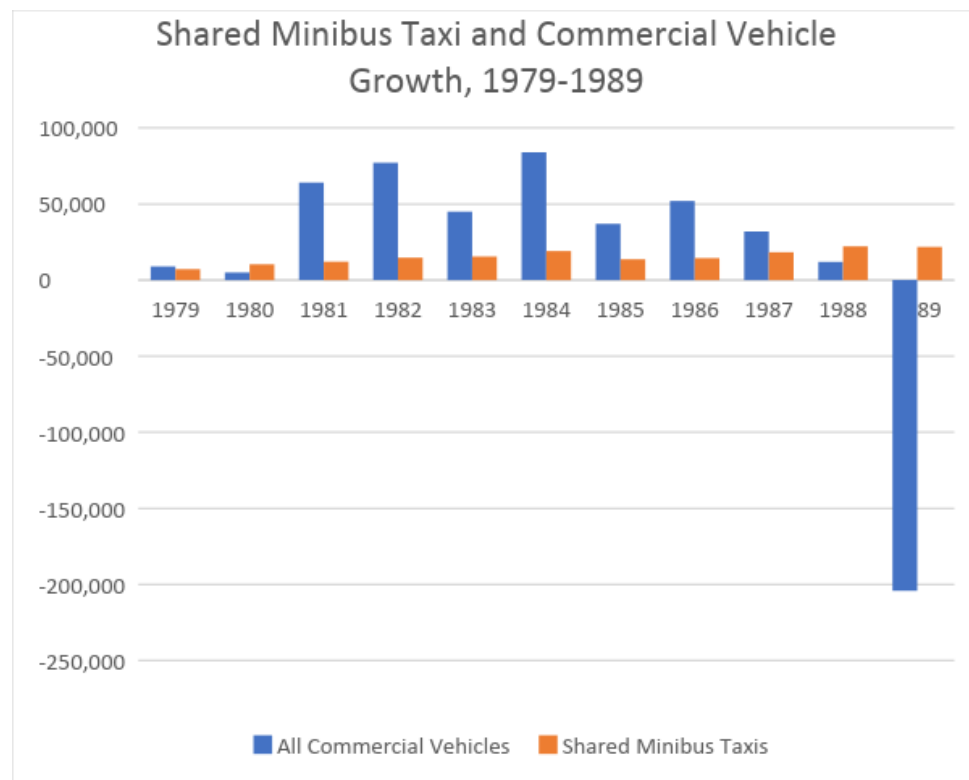


Figure 5.3 Shared Minibus Taxi and Commercial Vehicle Growth, 1979-1989

The violence black South African experienced in urban communities, particularly, certainly played a significant role in the struggles between taxi fleets registered to specific associations. The most infamous involved rival associations whose executives were intimately connected to the fractured, and sometimes infighting anti-apartheid movement is partly to blame for what has been understood as the failure of the taxi revolution. Dismissing the assumption that the taxi revolution was a unilaterally positive experience for the struggle against apartheid, Jackie Dugard argued that the upswings of the taxi industry were almost immediately followed by a nadir in taxis' alliance with the activism emanating from the youth in the townships.³⁸⁵ Dugard explained that as the taxi industry grew in popularity, particularly amongst activists in the aftermath of the Soweto Uprising, its basis in the politics of a contested anti-apartheid movement became increasingly exposed.³⁸⁶ At the same time, a desperate apartheid regime brought back the lessons it learned from its strategy of destabilization throughout Southern Africa, and applied them in the townships. Precisely because taxis had successfully penetrated township space and knew (by relying upon) the routines of its residents, the apartheid state inducted the police to exhume taxis' varying political allegiances and then allowed taxi associations' competing interests to work against the struggle as a whole. Investigating these political tensions further, Dugard along with Makubetse Sekhonyane explained that apartheid and its agents of destabilization forever transformed the economic gains and entrepreneurial aspirations of the different taxi associations, turning

³⁸⁵ Dugard, *From Low-Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi Violence in South Africa, 1987-2000*, 4.

³⁸⁶ See Belinda Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004); Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2000).

them into competitors who would eventually wage war on each other.³⁸⁷ And as Dugard and Sekhonyane have showed, these wars continued even after 1994. What they do not question, however, are the grounds on which the revolution stood in the first place.

It is possible to pit the narrative of devolution into war against the narrative of revolution, and to make the argument that taxi scholarship was much more optimistic in the late 1980s because there was much more optimism around the nationalist project, but that pessimism permeated the 1990s and 2000s because of the failures of the TRC, the ANC, and so forth.³⁸⁸ But rather than go through such a familiar exercise, I want to read the story of war and revolution as endpoints of a dominant narrative of taxi history. I do this to argue that if we think about the story of the taxi from 1976-1996 as a revolution that went awry, and read it alongside, for example, the failure of an "African Renaissance," then we bring back the question of failure to the concerns of Halberstam and Ruga, and do a few other things in the process.³⁸⁹ First, we pluck the *kombi*³⁹⁰ out of

³⁸⁷ Sekhonyane and Dugard, "The Taxi Industry and Government at Loggerheads: A Violent Legacy."

³⁸⁸ The most important work on this topic is Hein Marais, *South Africa Pushed to the Limit: The Political Economy of Change* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2010).

³⁸⁹ The topic of failure is a subject of intense public debate amongst intellectuals throughout the continent, but particularly in Southern Africa, which witnessed decolonization most recently. See the following for one example of the contemporary debate playing out in South Africa: Mo Ibrahim, "Africa Needs to Move Towards Afro-Realism," *Mail & Guardian*, October 18 2013.

³⁹⁰ *Kombi* refers to the Volkswagen Kombi minibus, but has come to be used as a shorthand for the South African minibus taxi in some circles. Thus, *kombi* contrasts from the *matatu* in Nairobi and the *dala dala* in Dar es Salaam in name and history only. The ironic use of *kombi* in this instance thus reflects the larger project's move to think about these paratransit projects alongside each other, precisely because they all emerged at the same time.

a paradigm of South African exceptionalism.³⁹¹ It is well documented that the minibus taxi is not unique, but is found all throughout cities in the Global South.³⁹² Second, we recognize that the South African taxi story is a familiar one – perhaps not about vehicles (although this, too, might be true), but certainly around questions of ethnic conflict and civil war in the aftermath of colonialism. Third, we begin to look again at the problematic of failed (African) nationalisms, economies, states, and so on, but not simply as questions about political economy, but also as questions of history.³⁹³ Finally, when we view the ways the collaboration between cities and social science researchers in the Department of Transportation, for example, approached ending the taxi wars and restructured the taxi industry for a neoliberalizing South Africa after transition, we deliberately reinsert the *kombi* story back into questions facing the continent and the rest of the world in the postapartheid.

Nationalist Narratives and Neoliberalism

Reading the political economy of the taxi alongside its history as well as the move to erase that history (i.e. to scrap the taxi industry) has given a continuing critique of

³⁹¹ The most important critique of “South African Exceptionalism” is found in Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

³⁹² For a comparative overview, see the following: Robert Cervero, *The Transit Metropolis: A Global Inquiry* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998); Kenda Mutongi, “Thugs or Entrepreneurs? Perceptions of Matatu Operators in Nairobi, 1970 to the Present,” *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 76, no. 4 (2006); Matteo Rizzo, “Being Taken for a Ride: Privatisation of the Dar Es Salaam Transport System 1983-1998,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 40, no. 1 (2002); Todd Sanders, “Buses in Bongoland: Seductive Analytics and the Occult,” *Anthropological Theory* 8, no. 2 (2008).

³⁹³ For a general overview, see Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

structural adjustment in the larger part of Africa new meaning and urgency for issues like poverty in South Africa, even though the country was never directly targeted by the project.³⁹⁴ I use "structural adjustment" to talk about South Africa as a way of marking as shorthand a particular *response* to the argument that "more efficient use of scarce resources – human and capital, managerial and technical, domestic and foreign – is essential for improving economic conditions."³⁹⁵ In other words, structural adjustment depends on the idea of success that Halberstam critiques through her exploration of failure.³⁹⁶ In any case attention to the "more" in the argument for structural adjustment is instructive of what the international finance institutions like the World Bank saw as the failings of African countries' ability to determine their own economic futures. So, like the narrative of the taxi in South Africa, structural adjustment relied on a teleology of rise and decline. In other words, structural adjustment relied on the same assumption about failure and history that the taxi story of revolution to war does.

This was apparent in the 1990s when the National Taxi Task Team (NTTT), for instance, went back to the taxi industry to try and figure out exactly how it worked and where problems arose as a way to change the structures of the industry, reform it, and end the wars at the same time.³⁹⁷ In other words, the taxi recapitalization scheme that the NTTT encouraged after presenting their findings was a localized form of structural adjustment. So if we take structural adjustment as a framing project of neoliberalism in

³⁹⁴ See David Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³⁹⁵ World Bank, "Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action," (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1981).

³⁹⁶ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*.

³⁹⁷ National Taxi Task Team, "Final Recommendations of the National Taxi Task Team: A Task Team of the Minister of Transport," (Pretoria: Department of Transport, 1996).

(and on) the global South, then rethinking the narrative of rise and decline in the history of taxis reveals transport reform in South Africa's cities as a familiar mode of development and a critical marker of the present. As David Harvey explained, this mode of development fit neatly into the neoliberal tropes of entrepreneurship, finance capital, and deregulation that have categorized policy in the global North since the 1980s.³⁹⁸

What is interesting about neoliberal development tropes were the ways they enabled SABTA to re-narrativize the dispossessed and displaced protagonists of the shared minibus taxi industry's mission to take back the actual dilapidated streets that the apartheid government forced them to run, walk, and drive by flooding them with 16-passenger vans. The tropes also gave SABTA a global language through which they could communicate their most important economic ethos: enfranchising black people in white supremacist state. In so doing, the tropes helped mark what have been viewed as the most significant historical moments in the history of South Africa's taxis: 1) how the taxi industry incubated South Africa's first black independent businessmen; 2) how the SABTA successfully negotiated for low-interest loans for its members to buy new vehicles; and 3) how SABTA's leadership wrested control over licensure away from the apartheid state as well as the consequences of this move.³⁹⁹

While the language of neoliberalism helped the shared minibus taxi industry engage in the language of global markets with multinational corporations like British Petroleum, Shell, Exxon, and Mobile, SABTA was crucial in localizing the worldwide effects of building an industry in the context of OPEC butting heads with the Cold War

³⁹⁸ Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

³⁹⁹ McCaul, *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry*.

giants of the United States and the Soviet Union in a local black language, which, by the end of the Cold War, would be part of a growing undercurrent of ethnic-based violence alongside the taxi wars. In so doing, as I explain in the next chapter, SABTA's "Sithutha Isizwe" slogan wrote the black taxi revolution into the pages of would-be struggle history (looking back on the anti-apartheid movement in retrospect) as it celebrated the triumphs of neoliberal capitalism for some black South Africans. While transport historians writing in the early 1990s might be drawn almost symptomatically to the post-1980 story, by this point, the neoliberal tropes in the shared minibus taxi industry's history overshadowed the story of dispossession and displacement that made the black taxi industry's aim necessary and legitimate for the industry's progenitors. Rather than merely plot the taxi industry's achievements in soliciting global capital by using the neoliberal tropes of the democratic capitalist world, I interrogate SABTA's story about itself against the grain of the effects neoliberal economics the African National Congress would promote in its first few years as the first black party to lead South Africa. Ironically, the same language SABTA used to promote itself would be used against the shared minibus taxi industry as its anti-democratic operating mechanisms became more explosive and threatening to the respectability of new nations in the global Cold War context.

Celebrating Unity in Business and Entrepreneurship

In 1981, SABTA held its first national conference at Umgababa, a beachside resort set aside for black South Africans to gather and celebrate during apartheid. The event at Umgababa was a tremendous, flashy affair. The order of events included a beauty pageant, performances by pop icon Brenda Fassie, and an awards ceremony honoring the taxi industry's closest allies. Closing the ceremonies, SABTA's two

presidents Godfrey Ntlatlong and James Ngcoya presented a traditional Zulu shield and spear to the Deputy Director General of Transport Robbie Meyer, and called him an “honorary Zulu,” giving him the new name Mnumzane Skechekeche. The gesture signified three types of unity and the importance of “speaking with one voice” in the business world. The gifts themselves, first and foremost, were symbols of Zulu nationalism, which extolled the historical memory of the 18th century king Shaka, who “unified” Nguni-speaking indigenous black South Africans across their linguistic, historic, and socio-cultural differences. By offering a spear and shield, the Executive gave a traditional symbol of unity. That the gift was exchanged between a Zulu CEO-type and someone who he viewed as a peer in industry also symbolized the unification of two very different forms of racial capitalism apartheid set into motion. SABTA’s was meant to equip displaced and dispossessed people with the tools and economic infrastructure of credit and finance to help them lift themselves up by their driving bootstraps. Toyota’s, on the other hand, was grown and perfected on the grounds paved over lands once under the dominion of the spirits of the land. Third, the newspaper photos of the event proceedings were meant to bring taxi operators together all across the country into what SABTA decided was an important historical moment.



Figure 5.4 “SABTA Meets Schoeman [in] Historic Taxi Talks,” *Drive On*, September 1981

The event, photo, and the archive of which both are part espoused neoliberal values that measured success by the free market’s ability to engage black entrepreneurial individuals and families of all sorts in capitalist activities. Key to the ways neoliberalism attracted the taxi industry was by promoting capitalism’s ability to socially reproduce good, stable, healthy, and productive people and progeny. Judith Jack Halberstam explains that this form of neoliberalism was and still is underpinned by profound assumptions about a community of heterosexual families who move nations forward.

“Success,” Halberstam explains, “in a heteronormative, capitalist society equates [success] too easily to specific forms of reproductive maturity combined with wealth accumulation.”⁴⁰⁰ *Drive On* supported its master narrative of a taxi industry that made friends with neoliberal capitalists with photos, oral histories, and news reports about the most important men in the taxi industry, and the women by their side, and combined its reading of the framing economic and gendered conditions of neoliberalism, which, together made the black taxi revolution a success. Through advertisements of taxis able to carry more and more women and men, and stories of taxi women running businesses and families in the absence of patriarchal figures, *Drive On* celebrated colonial-era heterosexual (and sometimes heterosexist) values of colonial African communities in South Africa and beyond.⁴⁰¹ Through celebrating accumulation, speculation and finance capitalism, on the one hand, and the resilience of heterosexual African families, on the other, Halberstam helps us understand the social and economic world of taxis in the 1980s.⁴⁰² The next chapter builds on the story of the 1980s to reveal the extent to which people still believing in the unrealized potential of the BTR for the world of

⁴⁰⁰ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 2.

⁴⁰¹ For more on colonialism and heterosexuality in Africa, see Marc Epprecht, *Heterosexual Africa?: The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of Aids* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008).

⁴⁰² I cannot fault African and Africanist scholars in the 1990s for viewing the political economy of gender and sexuality in the ways Halberstam discussed. While there was little time for Khosa to reflect on how other social divisions (i.e. race, class, ethnicity, and gender) played a role in policing and traversing taxi routes, or in the taxi wars themselves, Khosa’s dissertation devoted an entire chapter to gender. Through equating gender with women, Khosa was able to profile the lives of a few taxi women who did not make it into the pages on *Drive On* women. However, I am deeply indebted to Khosa’s study because it was one of the firsts to use *Taxi Media* and the newspaper articles filling its pages to try and make sense of the spatial politics that played a significant role in driving the taxi wars in neoliberal, late-apartheid South Africa.

neoliberalism in the 21st century. Such a framing of the taxi has not only categorized taxi research in the 1990s and early 2000s, but also has the potential to implicate and orient future work on taxis along similar lines, (un)wittingly advocating neoliberal investments in future economic growth.

"Entrepreneurship" continues to be the most important a neoliberal buzzword in government, banking, and development circles in South Africa and the rest of the African continent today. Because of the ways in which the self-starting business person can be posed as the opposite of the unemployed and as the antidote to unemployment, entrepreneurs, just like the fortunate drivers legally licensed to drive taxis, in theory, could help dispossessed and displaced black South Africans regain what hundreds of years of colonialism took from them and their ancestors. Advertisements for banks giving out loans to black South Africans leading up to the end of apartheid and nearly two decades after the end of apartheid demonstrate the faith the shared minibuss taxi industry put in finance capitalism tell the story best. In an advertising segment in the *Mail & Guardian* in October 2013, Nedbank observed that "part of the unemployment challenge stems from the fact that the country has a large number of young people, including young graduates, who have not embraced entrepreneurship as a career choice."⁴⁰³ By framing the problem as the youth's inability to see entrepreneurship as a critical pathway to repossession, but not necessarily replacement, Nedbank offered a solution to the youth

⁴⁰³ "1m Entrepreneurs Can Create 5m Jobs," *Mail & Guardian*, October 11 2013. The International Monetary Fund also espoused the trope of the entrepreneurs in its 2013 country report of South Africa, arguing that the country is currently challenged in "reducing red tape and regulations [as a way to] strip away barriers to entrepreneurship and trade and investment." In Lynley Donnelly, "Acrimony Puts South African at the Back of the Class," *ibid.*

unemployment problem – small business loans, educational loans, et cetera – and marked itself (and finance capital more generally) as not just a lender, but also the best agent for social change. In the piece, Nedbank also claimed to value teaching the young in the move to effect change. "There is a need and opportunity [in postapartheid South Africa] to effectively groom future business owners by cultivating a culture of entrepreneurship even at a high school level," Nedbank remarked.⁴⁰⁴ To the *Drive On* journalists looking for stories to promote the taxi industry while the taxi wars raged, promoting the neoliberal value of entrepreneurship would have meant revisiting the history of the taxi revolution (as it is presently written, understood, and retold) as a way of educating the youth about how some self-starting businessmen not only contributed to a particular moment in the resistance to apartheid, but also enabled the building of the black middle-class, and inaugurating some of the modern foundations for combatting poverty.⁴⁰⁵ "Looking Back" did exactly this.⁴⁰⁶

The drive to use the history of development in the absence of close readings of dispossession and displacement histories also played out the way 1980s *Drive On* journalists in a 2006 US-based Mercatus Institute study, "Taxing Alternatives: Poverty Alleviation and the South African Taxi/Minibus Industry." In the study, the research Karol Boudreaux used a reading of the history of the taxi revolution as way to argue for

⁴⁰⁴ "1m Entrepreneurs Can Create 5m Jobs," *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ For a transnational discussion of the neoliberal contestations, see Helga Leitner, Jamie Peck, and Eric S Sheppard, *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers* (New York: Guilford Press, 2007).

⁴⁰⁶ I do not want to advance an argument about whether this particular use of taxi history is a good or bad thing. What I want to contend here is that the over-reliance on neoliberal trope obscures other possible radical solutions that see neoliberalism itself as the fundament paradigm that entrenched poverty in the first place – a critique that some black queer activists have articulated against Pride.

tapping into the inherent entrepreneurial spirit of the taxi industry as a way to combat unemployment and poverty in Africa. In the opening summary of the study, Boudreaux cited the failings of structural adjustment as the point of departure towards revisiting the history of the taxi in the postapartheid. But after painting a bleak picture, Boudreaux suggested a solution – the powerful potential of history. Here I quote Boudreaux at length because of the ways the summary of her study revealed a potentially dangerous interpretation of taxi history for the postapartheid, particularly considering the configuration of South Africa within the neoliberal world order.

After five decades and billions of dollars, foreign aid to Africa has failed to ignite sustainable economic growth. For too many Africans, their quality of life today is worse than it was thirty years ago. Rather than looking to outsiders for answers, the key to poverty alleviation in Africa is more likely to come from local entrepreneurship. However, this is often thwarted by government actions that make it difficult, if not impossible, to start and grow a business. The taxi/minibus industry in South Africa... has been a wellspring of black entrepreneurial activity. Yet, this industry suffers from a legacy of illegality – thanks to apartheid-era laws that restricted economic opportunities for black South Africans.⁴⁰⁷

While extolling the minority constituency of licensed taxi operators' economic activities, Boudreaux's categorization of illegality marginalized the greater numbers of taxis on roads, particularly after 1987s. The illegals to which Boudreaux refers were the "pirate" taxi owners – unregistered, unlicensed taxi operators who registered taxi operators sought to marginalize throughout the 1970s and 1980s – and the tensions between them and licensed taxi drivers created the foundation for many of the taxi wars the country witnessed around the same time. Within Halberstam's understanding of neoliberalism as both capitalist and heterosexist, these sorts of miscreants might have offered "alternative

⁴⁰⁷ Karol Boudreaux, "Taxing Alternatives: Poverty Alleviation and the South African Taxi/Minibus Industry," *Minibus Industry (February 2006)* (2006): iii.

possibilities” to life in a capitalist society, but are frequently silenced within the archive.⁴⁰⁸ But these pirates were never welcomed within the scope of the BTR, which focused on convincing the state to license fit men and women taxi drivers, and attracting big business to lobby on the taxi industry’s behalf.⁴⁰⁹

The Goldstone Commission and the Media in the Time of the Taxi Wars

By the time South Africa elected the ANC to its executive branch in 1994, the Chairman Richard Goldstone of the Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation in the Taxi Industry (the Goldstone Commission) had already delivered seven reports to the South African President about what was going on behind of the surface of the taxi war pandemic in the country. Reading the Goldstone Commission reports underscore the important role ending the taxi played in envisioning a viable future after apartheid and with a black-led government. Through their deep investigations of dispossessed and displaced black communities such as the townships and informal settlements in Cape Town, and the homelands in the Transvaal and the Eastern Cape, Commissioners inadvertently racialized the taxi wars as “black” problems in black South African communities, and sought to make their activities vividly intelligible to the state, whether it was the ANC in 1994, or the NP beforehand. Like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which broadcasted stories of hardship and

⁴⁰⁸ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 19.

⁴⁰⁹ I do not discuss pirates at great length in the thesis because my sources frequently silenced their voices. It is important for the reader, however, to begin keep these radical figures in mind as the story about the collaboration between neoliberalism and historical narrative continued to unfold in the 21st century, especially when Athi-Patra Ruga made *After He Left...*, the subject of Chapter 6.

violence during the apartheid period, the Goldstone Commission was rooted in a familiar British colonial apparatus: the Commission of Inquiry.⁴¹⁰ While the Goldstone Commission's role in the drive to end the taxi wars believed it helped play a part in making black communities safer in the transition out of apartheid, its colonial logic was fundamentally anti-black in the way it ignored the ways apartheid dispossession and displacement helped found the taxi wars as much as the tensions between licensed and unlicensed taxi operators. Moreover, the drive to end the taxi wars in the early 1990s capitalized on gendered neoliberal tropes to expose black communities as particularly vulnerable to politics that made them less sustainable. By viewing the Goldstone Commission's activities alongside SABTA's public relations to use the repossession and replacement history of the taxi industry to join in the transition out of apartheid, this section reveals the ways South Africa's transition period encapsulated a broader move to bring rogue blackness under control, both nationally and globally.

Instability has little place in the global marketplace, particularly after 2008. After nationalists confronted this problem of instability head on in the 1950s because decolonized Africa aspired to trade with the West on equal footing, Frantz Fanon observed that African nationalists around the continent made one important mistake in their plans for a decolonized future. They created short-term strategies or they relied on ethnic associations because the "Winds of Change" were so immediate.⁴¹¹ Like the post-

⁴¹⁰ For more on the historical roots of the TRC as a Commission of Inquiry, see Adam Sitze, *The Impossible Machine: A Genealogy of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013). Like my thesis's Chapter 3, Sitze draws heavily on Foucault to analyze how the TRC shaped the stories it collected and disseminated rehearsed British colonial logics.

⁴¹¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* [*Les damnés de la terre*], trans. Richard Philcox (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004).

WWII French case of colonialism shows best, before completely withdrawing, Europeans either set up institutions to study, monitor, and govern their colonies informally as part of “Greater France,” or let them fall victim to Cold War politics and become “unstable.” Moreover, David Scott argues that “vulnerability to tragedy” haunts nationalist revolutionaries as they plan to join a political world order in which they are dependent, and, historically, subservient as a colony.

Just as soon as the Goldstone Commission became tasked to study, monitor, and govern the taxi wars, new archives illuminating the “unstable” world of the shared minibus industry and the mafia-like taxi wars appeared. Covering the two years up to Mandela’s successful Presidential bid, *Taxi Media*, for example, sourced every newspaper and magazine for any taxi-related story and then compiled them into a newsletter, which they could distribute to researchers following the taxi wars. Doing so helped casual readers and taxi industry investors stay abreast of Goldstone Commission discussions and taxi activities on the ground. The taxi wars captured most news circuits’ attention because conflict sold, not because its pages necessarily helped contribute to the democratic society a post-apartheid South Africa could offer. But South Africans were genuinely concerned about how a potential regime change could occur as the taxi wars raged on, killing some of the most successful black petty capitalists in 20th century South Africa. Thus, *Taxi Media* documented the anxieties from nearly every level of the taxi industry, on the one hand. They also documented every level of taxi governance, from government official, to owner-driver, to passenger. *Taxi Media* also proved to be a good source for the leaders in the taxi industry to monitor nationwide conversations about

them. Its pages also gave taxi leaders sufficient time and a legitimate platform to change the narrative of their current and future citizenship.

When *Taxi Media* ventured on its newspaper collecting scheme, documenting the affairs of taxis throughout the country, scholars sympathetic to the neoliberal values of the taxi industry intervened. Stefan Sonderling, for example, reminded communications scholars that media reports highlights mere fictions in the taxi industry, rather than its realities.⁴¹² Framed within narratives of tragedy that pervaded the late apartheid context in South Africa, taxis generated great interest because they were identifiable subjects of instability in the negotiations leading up to 1994, on the one hand, and mythical in white communities, on the other hand, because their effects were localized in dispossessed and displaced communities, not the stable ones that neoliberal South Africa sought to democratize across race. While the Goldstone Commission solicited data proving or disproving deregulation as a reasonable future for taxis and the country, widespread public opinion was increasingly swayed by media portrayals. In many ways, Sonderling took the side of the Goldstone Commission, which drew data-driven (as opposed to opinion-driven) conclusions about the secret taxi world. On the other hand, data was not infallible either. Sonderling's point was taken by those who saw taxis as a vehicle for transformation, just as the country was transforming itself. If South African readers in 1992 looked solely at the media that was not run by the taxi industry to understand the taxi wars and the conditions undergirding them, then they would see negative portrayals exclusively. Precisely because portrayals of taxis as violent and destructive pervaded the

⁴¹² Stefan Sonderling, "Murder of the Combi-Taxi Industry by the Mass Media: Perceptions and Realities of Road Safety," *Communicatio* 18, no. 2 (1992).

white and black public conscious leading up to the end of apartheid, SABTA attempted to counter taxi war narratives with BTR ones, and preserve them in print.

The flourishing reports on taxis in the media, government chambers, and taxi ranks and boardrooms created an atmosphere in which the most powerful taxi agents in journalism, research, government, business, and on the streets could debate how best to mold the taxi image for the good of all their interests. These interests were as much quotidian (i.e. the management of commuters' ordinary work schedules) as they were of national importance. The transition out of apartheid, too, needed to take stock of both realms of experience. For David Scott, "tragedy" framed nationalist, Cold War, and post-Cold War dreams, particularly in the former colonies, and this was certainly the case in Africa.⁴¹³ Furthermore, Adam Sitze explains concerns about "tragedy" also undergirded institutions of colonial governmentality.⁴¹⁴ It is unclear whether or not British colonists in Africa, for example, would have considered any aspects of "native life" anything other than tragic, but colonists would never believe they had adequate answers to their questions before enlightened studies were undertaken, no matter how much it obscured people's everyday realities.⁴¹⁵

The *Taxi Media* newsletter as a whole shocked leaders in the taxi industry, many of which had a heavy hand in shaping the stories that appeared on the pages of *Drive On*. The industry worked hard in the 1980s to portray its interests in building up black

⁴¹³ David Scott, *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁴¹⁴ Sitze.

⁴¹⁵ Chinua Achebe ended *Things Fall Apart* with the same sort of colonial anthropological violence, and the erasure of any meaning behind Okonkwo's tragic suicide.

communities by transporting people to work and building good lives for their families, and exhumed as many oral histories illuminating first-hand perspectives from the 1970s and before, and offering them up as proof of the BTR's ability to help black South African life thrive through the values of neoliberalism. *Drive On*'s mere existence in the archives is evidence of the taxi industry's struggle to make their interests seem ordinary, but critical to enfranchising dispossessed and displaced black South Africans. Doing so also meant distancing their individual personalities from commuter complaints and the pandemic. Thus, it came as quite a shock to see the less thoughtful, unrefined, and ominous presentation of the taxi industry in *Taxi Media*. Lacking the beautiful advertisements, and portraits of taxi men, women, and families working hard to make ends meet, *Taxi Media*'s pages were filled to the brim with scenes of violent conflict.

By the time *Taxi Media* came into existence, the taxi wars were well known throughout the country, the Goldstone Commission was solely responsible for coming up with a rationale for why they were so far-reaching. Not only did the public see the wars in news reports, but taxi concerns now reached some of the highest ranks of government. *Taxi* and *Drive On* could never survive in such a climate. In 1992, the jig was up! Taximen needed to backpedal and find a new narrative to cling to. "Tragedy," for them, was just not it. In many ways, the Goldstone Commission's report, too, was damning to the neoliberal taxi industry and the late apartheid government on the broadest scales. While the Goldstone Commission eventually admitted in its fourth report that apartheid, indeed, created the conditions for the pandemic taxi wars, Commissioners also noted how urbanization could never be curbed or controlled with the racist policies that underlined the process. Second, the Commission blamed the market's inability to make room for the

informal economy. The Commission's evidence was based almost entirely on interviews with taxi operators and commuters. Frustrations with how big business belittled them and didn't see everyday commuting issues as the ones at stake. Pirie reminds us that frequent complaints helped shape (if not forcefully determine) transport policies and reform. By governing the industry "from above" instead of guiding policies beginning with the struggles of commuters, taxi operators lost faith in the abstract "market" looming above. Third, the Commission confirmed the media's bias that the taxi industry is unsustainable, one dangerously ridden with petty feuds which had a devastating impact on black commuters, if not the entire future of the country. It was from these findings that the Commission made its recommendations to the government. Reform, the Commission decided, should come from above; designed to subtly coerce the industry into good behavior.

Recognizing the importance of the informal economy and all the messiness it entailed, the Goldstone Commission, while upholding taxis' core values, made sure that the industry did not get too out of hand. Thus, it recognized the pitfalls of deregulation. Taking the side of the taxi industry (who also vehemently opposed deregulation), the Goldstone Commission's first recommendation was to stop deregulation. Instead, the Commission determined to "repeal and replace" the taxi licensing boards which let licensure get out of control in the 1980s. Preventing the market from dictating taxi operations, on the one hand, and the seemingly arbitrary boards on the other, the Goldstone Commission identified different transport reform/change agents. Doing so would also take pressure off the national government during its time of power transfer.

The Commission determined that South Africa was fiscally and administratively incapable of “bailing out” the industry as it was beginning to implode due to the taxi wars. Blocking one neoliberal trend (deregulation) for another (privatization), the Commission suggested the government shift taxi regulation to local leaders and already successful taxi entrepreneurs. Such leaders were increasingly identifiable. The taxi press and their lobbyist executives made them quite conspicuous. In so doing, however, the Commission privatized a space they treated like public works: taxi ranks. Taxi associations originally established ranks to employ marshalls who would monitor and police affiliated taxi fleets. Through its suggestion that local leaders make infrastructural improvements in ranks, the Commission followed private-public partnership protocols, which Pirie discussed in regards to bus boycott histories. Pirie suggested that South Africa’s history of transport infrastructure improvements always followed activism at the grassroots level. Commuters could always complain, threatening to take their business elsewhere if things didn’t change to their liking. Taxi historically benefitted from the time it took for improvements to go into effect. The Goldstone Commission folded the taxi industry, which had usually been immune, into a process that usually vexed white-owned public-private transport providers, like PUTCO.

4th Goldstone Commission Report on the Groblersdal Taxi Wars

It was the Goldstone Commission’s fourth interim report, which reported on its findings in Groblersdal, a farming community 150 kilometers northeast of Pretoria. The committee became interested in the town after submitting its preliminary findings on Cape Town, which they conducted research for over 1992 in Cape Town. The

introduction to the fourth report stated that it had halted its study in Cape Town for the moment, but planned to resume its research on 17 February 1993, presumably after the end of the Christmas holiday season in the country's most fashionable summer vacation destination. The committee's aims were to interrogate taxi violence and intimidation in Groblersdal, notably "the nature and causes of the violence, the aims of the violence, what persons are [sic] involved, and what steps are recommended for its cessation."⁴¹⁶ In order to hear as many sides of the violent conflict, the Committee invited the Groblersdal United Taxi Association Committee (or GUTAC) and the South African Police to give testimonies. The other representative body was the Taxi Operator's Peace Initiative Committee (or Topic) and its Chair Mr. M. E. Madiba. From the report and the testimonies that contributed to the Commission's research, we learn a lot about how dispossession and displacement contributed to the character of this one particular taxi war on the outskirts of South Africa's administrative capital.

Groblersdal is the white neighborhood buttressed between two homelands designated for African self-rule (KwaNdebele and Lebowa), and a black township called Motetema, "some eight kilometers distant," according to the report.⁴¹⁷ The geography that opens the background section of the fourth report is one of complete dispossession and displacement, even within the report's own findings. As a white area that "has grown as a commercial centre and attracts customers from the surrounding areas," Groblersdal, a town smack dab in the middle of homelands and townships, was designed to invite in

⁴¹⁶ D. J. Rossouw and M. N. S. Sithole, "Fourth Interim Report," ed. Committee Inquiring into Public Violence and Intimidation in the Taxi Industry (Pretoria: R. J. Goldstone Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation, 1993).

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

black labor and capital temporarily, and send them back home daily. Originally buses were designed to bring these “visitors” to town, but as the town grew in importance, the city raised funds to build a 1.8 million-Rand taxi rank on the town’s eastern border in 1983, a year marking minibus taxis’ golden age in the country. Four reputable taxi associations helped set fares, police ranks, and ensure an easy flow of passengers. These were the Nebo and the Dannilton Taxi Associations at first, and then the Janefurse and Marble Hall Taxi Associations joined them. For five years, the report stated, “all of these associations used the ranking facilities at Groblersdal in relative peace and administered control themselves.”⁴¹⁸ In 1988, the four taxi associations tried to combine their organizations into the Groblersdal United Taxi Association Committee (which would eventually become GUTAC).⁴¹⁹ Since they had stuffed the taxi rank since the beginning, the Nebo, Dennilton, Janefurse, and Marble Hall taxi associations felt a District association would help bring together taxis in the area. However, another “mother body” taxi association was beginning to form at the very same time, also calling itself the Groblersdal Taxi Association (or the GTA). Rather than building his reputation on historic ties to the area and the original associations which organized there, the GTA affiliated itself with SABTA. Their competing claims to the Groblersdal taxi rank on the eastern edge of the city, according to the Goldstone commission report, started a war

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ More research needs to be conducted on the extent to which the Groblersdal Taxi Association was proposed as a way to undercut competing claims to the new rank and the routes between KwaNdebele, Lebowa, Motetama, and the Groblersdal City Centre, especially since the entire country saw an exponential increase in the number of minibus taxis operating on roads between 1983-1993. Further exploration of this episode begs historians to ask the question of whether or not consolidated taxi associations in the 1987/1988 moment was a way for powerful taxi operators to either disenfranchise or control new entrants into the market.

between GUTAC and the Fta. “The way in which the GTA came into being was resented by the older taxi association,” the Commission reported, “and there is evidence that *that* was the start of tensions which eventually led to open conflict.”⁴²⁰ There was no additional mention of how this “white area” right in the middle of black homelands and townships contributed to the competing claims over the rank and routes that brought workers and shoppers from these places and into the center city.

Rather than putting any blame on apartheid policies, the Goldstone commission found some fault with the white town council’s refusal to mediate the disagreement between the two groups. Instead, the town council completely abandoned any ownership or commitment to the rank (including upkeep), leaving the SABTA-backed and very well-resourced GTA to take over the rank, “to the exclusion of other taxi associations,” the Commission reported.⁴²¹ It was clear from the town council’s decision that Groblersdal concern was to keep its resources and the rhythms of dispossession and displacement that made the town work in place, while leaving the politics of black transport and any ensuing disagreements (which took the form of black people killing other black people) to under-resourced black communities. Commuters who used taxis to go between their designated black homes and designated white areas decided to take the issue into their own hands by organizing a boycott against shopping in Groblersdal. Boycotters demanded that the town allocate pick-up and drop-off stations in town so they would not have to interact with the minefield that the town council abandoned at the Groblersdal taxi rank. “The Groblersdal Town Council acceded to this demand and 36

⁴²⁰ My emphasis added. Rossouw and Sithole.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

such bays were worked out,” according to the Goldstone report, but the taxi war continued regardless. Perhaps the roots of the problem had already dug far to deep into the land.

Moreover, the in-town facilities the town council created in Groblersdal further polarized the violent spatial conflict between GUTAC and the GTA. After the town council’s compromise with the SABTA-backed taxi association, the gateway into town at the Groblersdal taxi rank as well as the official roads stemming in and out of the rank in effect became the GTA’s gang territories, while the routes that bypassed the rank and made b-lines to one of the 36 bays the town council created became GUTAC’s. In other words, GUTAC controlled travel within the white city while the GTA controlled travel to the white city, but apartheid transport could not have one without the other, so the divides between the two became even more hardened by the wider politics of ethnicization and exclusion, which made black South Africans manageable. But in a decade that saw the amplification of African voices in the industry, wars between the two were inevitable. What if rather than making bays accessible in the white city, the area created commercial centers in KwaNdebele, Lebowa, and Motetema. Because the entire area was premised on ensuring unequal access to resources, commuters could never really win with either taxi association.

The war that ensued between GUTAC and the GTA was facilitated by a town council that felt powerless to satisfy the demands of both associations adequately, highlighting the challenges local authorities faced when trying to accommodate the needs of dispossessed and displaced communities. In 1991, less than ten years after the Groblersdal taxi rank was in operation in the midst of the minibus taxi boom, “open

warfare broke out,” according to the Goldstone Commission Report, “resulting in serious loss of life, injury and damage.”⁴²² By this time, the Committee on Public Violence and Intimidation concluded that adjudication and regulation from the city and state could not restore any order to taxiing in Groblersdal in the years leading up to the end of apartheid. “A number of court cases ensued,” the Commissioner reported, “but these did nothing to normalize relationships.”⁴²³ So the Council threw up its hands in defeat, and turn the irreconcilable conflict over to fate, seeing as neither government nor national taxi association (SABTA or SALDTA) could reasonable intervene to any end. “Attempts by the *mogoshi* (chiefs) of the area also came to naught.”⁴²⁴ The Goldstone commissioners were only able to conduct interviews and its research after the Groblersdal Taxi Conflict Interim Agreement was signed in December 1992.

In summarizing the Groblersdal conflict, the Commission placed no blame on the local and national laws that dispossessed and displaced black communities, and whose small set of transport entrepreneurs sought to reverse their communities’ dispossession and displacement by organizing taxi associations and taking commuters to the city to support a marketplace (namely the taxi rank) that would support their entrepreneurship. Rather, the Commission blamed minibus taxi overpopulation and pirate taxis “poaching” customers, even though the police routinely detained unlicensed taxis, most likely contributing to a climate of clandestine taxiing and suspicion in an already tumultuous national political climate. The Commission also blamed the free reign in which taxi drivers could attain a license, the rising costs of driving a taxi on top of a 5,000-rand fee

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

to join the taxi rank as a GTA member, which advantaged veteran drivers over new entrants to the industry. Finally, the Commission listed “lawlessness,” “greed,” and “power struggle[s]” as the moral problems that an overcrowded taxi industry necessarily bred. Aware of how the changing tide across the country led to conflicts between the ANC’s armed wing on the one hand, and Inkhata Freedom Party (IFP) followers on the other, the Commission warned, “there is a serious danger that the whole situation may become politicized.”⁴²⁵ Thus, the Commission proposed a dull solution akin to a teacher separating feuding students from each other – an “admonition” they copy and pasted from the previous report on Cape Town.

“Resorting to any kind of physical violence is unacceptable. Not only should each operator withhold himself from indulging in any kind of physical harm to others, he should actively discourage those who want to do so... What is needed is greater empathy with others who are subject to similar stresses, less selfishness, more talking to resolve problems, less anger, greater respect for the rights of other operators, and a genuine desire to provide safe and efficient transport for commuters. In short, unless every person in the minibus industry wants peace and works towards it, all efforts to combat violence are doomed to failure.”⁴²⁶

A New Taxi Story for a New (read Neoliberal) South Africa

Former taxi owner Vusi Shongwe's 2013 insistence that the taxi industry "contributed towards the freedom we have achieved in this country" was a sentiment informed by a bevy of scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s that put the rise of the "black

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Gabrielle Hecht, *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade*, (MIT Press, 2012), <http://mitpress-ebooks.mit.edu/product/being-nuclear>
<http://mitpress-ebooks.mit.edu/product/being-nuclear> Note: Available to Stanford-affiliated users. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/stanford/Doc?id=10537987>.

taxi revolution" at the center of the struggle against apartheid.⁴²⁷ Despite Shongwe's reference to the immediate post-1976 moment in South Africa's history, it has been much more common since 1990 to think of the taxi industry within a longer timeline – one that views taxi history within a teleology of economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s and moral decline in the 1990s and 2000s. The literature that evaluates the taxi industry from 1976-1996 hones in on two moments: 1) the moment when the taxi industry grew despite apartheid from a small fractured group of businesses to an economic powerhouse; and 2) the point at which the taxi industry grew so quickly and on such a grand economic scale that it got out of hand, resulting in the famous taxi wars of the 1990s.⁴²⁸ I want to draw our attentions back to Shongwe's stubborn insistence on the "preservation" of the taxi industry, and how the urgency of saving the taxi in the 2010s and later has silenced issues of gender and sexuality.

Shongwe emphasized "preservation" because the more organic, informal modes of the minibus taxi industry are presently on their way out in the majority of South Africa's cities. The city of Johannesburg, for example, with the help of city planners and

⁴²⁷ Bank, "The Making of the Qwaqwa 'Mafia'? Patronage and Protection in the Migrant Taxi Business."; Barolsky, "Black Taxi Case Study."; Dugard, *From Low-Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi Violence in South Africa, 1987-2000*, 4; Sekhonyane and Dugard, "The Taxi Industry and Government at Loggerheads: A Violent Legacy."; Fourie, "Rethinking the Formalisation of the Minibus-Taxi Industry in South Africa."; Khosa, "Changing Patterns of 'Black' Bus Subsidies in the Apartheid City, 1944–1986."; "Routes, Ranks and Rebels: Feuding in the Taxi Revolution."; McCarthy and Swilling, "South Africa's Emerging Politics of Bus Transportation."

⁴²⁸ These works are categorized by the second half, the transition era (1990-1994), and the "post-apartheid" (1994-2004) periods of the larger research rush (1985-2005). The most important are the following: Dugard, *From Low-Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi Violence in South Africa, 1987-2000*, 4; Sekhonyane and Dugard, "The Taxi Industry and Government at Loggerheads: A Violent Legacy."; Fourie, "Rethinking the Formalisation of the Minibus-Taxi Industry in South Africa."; Khosa, "Routes, Ranks and Rebels: Feuding in the Taxi Revolution."

public transport consultants from the global South (particularly Latin America), rolled out the second and most anticipated phase of its new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system called Rea Vaya in 2013. Moreover, the city approached taxi drivers and owners to join the project as shareholders in the process, not only to quell dissent against the BRT system, but also to help facilitate the city's "taxi-scrapping" program, which enabled taxi owners to trade in their old vehicles for R56 000.⁴²⁹ The insistence on a proud but uncomplicated history of the taxi has been reinvigorated in opposition to the newest neoliberal directions in city transport planning in South Africa. Despite attempts to harken back to a romantic past, transport reform has been successful for the most part precisely because it is perhaps much more common to think about the taxi project as a history of failure.⁴³⁰

Beginning South Africa's taxi story with the "Looking Back" series as well as SABTA's choice of *Sithutha Isizwe* over *Sithwala Isizwe* reveals how the taxi middle-class argued for a place in the moment of political change in late-apartheid South Africa. Recognizing the role national cohesiveness would play in the transition from apartheid to 'freedom', the taxi industry chose to translate their business success through gender. Precisely because reproduction and sustainability made up crucial components to building a business, the invocations of life and reproduction that the taxi business sustained throughout its history counter its popular association with death and war. While the foundation of the taxi business is in the turn of the 20th century, the late 20th century

⁴²⁹ McCaul and Ntuli, "Negotiating the Deal to Enable the First Rea Vaya Bus Operating Company: Agreements, Experiences and Lessons."; Christoffel Venter, "The Lurch Towards Formalization: Lessons from the Implementation of BRT in Johannesburg, South Africa," *Research in Transportation Economics* 39, no. 1 (2013).

⁴³⁰ Yet the dominant history of failure of the 1980s taxi revolution will prove to be quite distinct from the sense of failure that Athi-Patra Ruga and Judith Jack Halberstam have identified. I will discuss this in Chapter 6.

context of transition violence and taxi war provided the opportunity to join in on the momentum for political change. Precisely because its historiography emerged in national and wartime, “Looking Back” went to great lengths to reiterate its history of serving the public good just as the country struggled to build a post-apartheid collective memory in a ‘New South Africa’. In order to demonstrate its historical contribution to the public good, SABTA reviewed its archive – the voices of the taxi pioneer. Far from being an illiterate lot of unskilled mechanics with drivers’ licenses, the taxi industry transcribed the archive of voices into print. Their project was sophisticated and academic.

By examining the history SABTA wrote in the 1980s and 1990s, this chapter revealed, yet again, SABTA’s project and archive as a deeply gendered one, and legitimized further by deep indigenous knowledge. Indeed, the gendered nature of the SABTA’s historical project connects the taxi industry more forcefully to a longer 100-year history than the story of horse-drawn carts. Since the early 20th century, governments measured the value of public transport by the extent to which it could maximize profits of the merchant classes and generate tax revenue on the one hand, and benefit the public good on the other. Balancing the value for elite and the public is most clearly seen when immigrant entrepreneurs introduced motor taxis to Cape Town in 1908.

CHAPTER SIX: Reinterpreting the History of Taxis: A Gendered Analysis

Introduction

15 years after apartheid ended in South Africa, the black queer performance artist Athi-Patra Ruga filmed footage of Cape Town's City Centre taxi rank (my first ethnographic research site) and transformed the footage into a piece entitled *After He Left*. The piece opens with the taxi rank at night.⁴³¹ Even though the piece officially begins with this frame, the audience may witness the narrative at a different moment, depending on when they stumble across the piece or pick up the headphones to listen in on a performance that has already been set in motion. In a sense, the very act of engaging the work reflects what Halberstam defines as queer: "the non-normative logics and organization of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time."⁴³² Veiled in a cream lampshade headpiece decorated in colorful light bulbs, Ruga's character Beiruth enters the frame of the taxi rank solemnly. Beiruth meanders about seamlessly before engaging in some sort of nocturnal commute that never takes off. The videocamera scans Beiruth's body, notably their⁴³³ ankles and shoes, as well as the glow of the headpiece. Spectators to the production engage the videocamera – waving at it, sometimes dancing sexually in front of it. Voices clamoring in Xhosa and other sounds of the taxi rank at night fill the audio space of the piece. By contrast, Beiruth is silent. Not

⁴³¹ Athi-Patra Ruga, *After He Left*, 2009. Solo exhibition. YOUNGBLACKMAN gallery.

⁴³² Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 6.

⁴³³ I use the personal pronouns of they, them, and their to refer to Beiruth, and in order to emphasize their gender-neutrality and queer subjectivity.

even the clicks of their red high-heeled pumps disturb the familiar soundscapes of the rank – the chatter, the heckling, the revving of taxi engines...

Considering the shared minibus taxi's history, Ruga's piece used what Judith Butler called "dissonant play" transformed the taxi rank – one of the country's more important sites of black dispossession, displacement, repossession, and replacement – into a queer space.⁴³⁴ Eschewing conventional histories of apartheid, queer South African performance artists have begun to offer some ways to rethink spaces the Group Areas Act created by deliberately inserting their queer bodies into them, and simultaneously querying the assumptions that give these spaces either their attractive albeit treacherous salience.⁴³⁵ While much of the scholarship extolling performances like Ruga's unhinge them from longer histories of apartheid, art historians like Anthea Buys warn against uncritically celebrating the static conceptions of identity politics that some contemporary artists champion because doing so keep in place the apartheid logic of separate races.⁴³⁶ However, *After He Left*... celebrates no particular gender or race, revealing both as flawed. This chapter draws attention to flaw and failure in Ruga's performance, arguing that both are profoundly generative for understanding taxis after the taxi wars of the late-apartheid era, and adding new ways of thinking of the shared minibus taxi historiography

⁴³⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 33.

⁴³⁵ Developing out of art history, performance studies, and literature, these works, which explore Athi-Patra Ruga's collections, include Lisa Aronson, "Gender and South African Art," *African Arts* 45, no. 5 (2012); Álvaro Luís Lima, "Screw the Nation! Queer Nationalism and Representations of Power in Contemporary South African Art," *ibid.* 44, no. 2; Fiona Siegenthaler, "Visualizing the Mental City: The Exploration of Cultural and Subjective Topographies by Contemporary Performance Artists in Johannesburg," *Research in African Literatures* 44, no. 2 (2013).

⁴³⁶ Anthea Buys, "Athi-Patra Ruga and the Politics of Context," *Critical Arts: A South-North Journal of Cultural & Media Studies* 24, no. 3 (2010).

beyond dispossession/displacement and repossession/replacement.⁴³⁷ Considering that pandemic taxi wars quickly followed the industry's repossession/replacement success, Ruga's performance within the context of the neoliberal ANC illuminates yet another dimension the failure of the transition out of the apartheid.⁴³⁸ Rather than viewing the taxi wars as the failure of the black taxi revolution, Athi-Patra Ruga directs our attention to the collective memory of repossession and replacement in transport, and shedding light on the industry's reliance on heteronormative and patriarchal tropes. *After He Left...*, I argue, helps to historicize contemporary stereotypes about riding taxis, particularly the all-too-common caution, "don't take a taxi at night," on the one hand, as well as the question of why the revolution failed to articulate a progressive politics of gender and sexuality.

Envisioning Transport Freedoms of Movement

It is important to review the literature on paratransit here to orient the reader to how transport is central to ideas about freedom in the 20th century, and to demonstrate how the shared minibus taxi in South Africa could inspire feelings of free and open movement while limiting the very freedoms transport is meant to enable. Robert Cervero divides paratransit into 5 classes, from largest to smallest: conventional buses, minibuses and jitneys, microbuses and pick-up trucks (or *bakkies* in South Africa), 3-wheeler

⁴³⁷ "Failure," Judith Jack Halberstam explains, "[is] a refusal of mastery, a critique of intuitive connections with capitalism between success and profit... [it is] a counterhegemonic discourse of losing." Judith Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 11-12.

⁴³⁸ Dugard, *From Low-Intensity War to Mafia War: Taxi Violence in South Africa, 1987-2000*, 4.

vehicles and motorcycles, and pedicabs or horse-carts.⁴³⁹ While buses, minibuses, and pick-up trucks usually travel on fixed routes, motorcycles and pedicabs alter their routes frequently, depending on customer needs. However, the only paratransit vehicles that operate on a fixed schedule are buses, which carry between 25 and 60 passengers on longer distances than minibuses, pick-up trucks, motorcycles, and pedicabs. Buses carry twice as many passengers as minibuses, and five to six times as many passengers than pick-up trucks do. Only motorcycles and pedicabs ever operate with only one passenger. Because of their smaller size and ability to operate with few passengers, motorcycles and pedicabs have the most freedom to take passengers off the beaten paths in cities and on the countryside. This is not to say that smaller paratransit vehicles are objectively more free than their larger counterparts. The customer service component of motorcycles and pedicabs is critically important because the driver accepts all the blame and all the reward. It would not be surprising for motorcycle and pedicab drivers to be more familiar with local languages. They might also be familiar faces in the neighborhoods where they work. They may be able to charge a higher fare to take passengers shorter distances, but they are checked by the extent to which the customer directs the vehicles' freeform and

⁴³⁹ It's easy to connect the history of South Africa's shared minibus taxi to the jitney's most foundational qualities. First, the shared minibus taxi served South Africa's townships because, while fixed in its route, its schedule varies, as do the commuters it serves. Moreover, its wider coverage put them in direct competition with conventional buses, which was clear from the 1977 Act. While they are all different, each class was part of a larger transport system, which would have been meant to service a wide range of commuters were South Africa not an explicitly racist state from 1948-1994. Precisely because there were far fewer class one vehicles owned privately, state-run timed buses prevented those companies from taking anything from their profit margins. State-run transport, for example, was in the state's interest. That's why the state took an interest in controlling the informal minibus taxi when their numbers began to swell. National transport departments didn't want anyone – especially black people – to compete with the country's bread and butter. Cervero, *Informal Transport in the Developing World*.

limited character for their own needs. In many ways, the smallest paratransit modes are most like the taxis and cabs throughout the world, and were the prototype for the door-to-door transport service big tech giants like Lyft and Uber scaled and developed for mobile phones.

Shared minibus taxis do not have the same freedom of movement that motorcycles and pedicabs do. While motorcycle and pedicab drivers have significant facetime with individual passengers, bus, minibus, and microbus drivers are never beholden to an individual or their idiosyncrasies to the same extent that the smallest paratransit operators are. While it would be tempting to chart the 5 paratransit vehicles on a spectrum whereby smaller vehicles have more mobility than larger ones, the customer service dynamic of plying routes for hire becomes complicated because of their fundamental relationships with passengers whose fares ensure the paratransit vehicles' operation.

But much more important than how each mode of paratransit facilitates or stifles drivers and passengers' feelings of freedom is the extent to which the transport service, for the purposes of my thesis, contributes to a segregationist state's dispossession and displacement rhythms as well as the extent to which they offer up opportunities for repossession and replacement. The history of taxis in South Africa reveals that the relative, albeit limited, freedoms minibuses enjoy and struggle with were what enabled them carve out a space for themselves in an apartheid transport economy despite all the other sorts of formal and informal vehicles they could have used to bring people from their homes to work and back. It is important to reiterate that South Africa's minibus taxis mobilized, specifically, *dispossessed* and *displaced* people. Motorcycles could not

create community the way minibus taxis could. Conventional buses did not need to personalize their customer service in the ways minibus taxis did. Of all the forms of transport Cervero discussed in his important study of paratransit in the developing world, no mode could contribute to the repossession and replacement movement minibus taxis promoted and enjoyed in the 1980s. In many ways, it was minibus taxis' ability to subvert the constraints of other forms of transport (i.e. formal transport, large transport, and small transport) and form collectives based on their position at the middle of all these modes which made them particularly suited for the South African anti-apartheid movement, both on the ground and globally.⁴⁴⁰

Gendering Taxi History

Imraan Coovadia's recent novel beautifully turns what some might consider the typical cast of South Africa's minibus taxi workers (drivers, 'sliding door men', and taxi 'bosses' or owners) into his main characters and writes into existence their fictional

⁴⁴⁰ The one puzzle this thesis has not solved was why English-speakers continue call the shared minibus taxi "taxis," knowing full well how slippery the term is. According to Robert Cervero's classification of paratransit in the developing world, shared minibus taxis aren't taxis at all. Taxis provide "door-to-door connections." Shared minibus taxis are more like buses, which, on the other hand, operate on fixed routes. Why do South Africa's minibus taxis hold onto the "taxi" designate as they became more standardized over the middle of the 20th century – that is, as they held to more prescribed routes and drop-off points as in the ubiquitous taxi ranks in townships and cities? It's possible this contradiction got worked out through a variety of ways. One way might have been to fudge their supply categories. As taxis become more standardized in their service structure, they increasingly began to overexpress their entrepreneurial market perspective in their style. While all taxis go from point A to B, for example, Jojo's taxi, for example, plays that one gospel song you like every morning, inspiring you to get through the drudgery of the workday and inspiring the commuter to perhaps choose Jojo's above another taxi. It's these distinctions that allowed such jitneys to be ascribed a spiritual character. Sanders.

counterparts in taxi poets, poetry teachers, and school administrators. The creative move to rethink taxi labor as being performed by working, middle, and capitalist classes together not only shows Coovadia's empathy with the taxi industry and a deep understanding of the politics around taxi work, it also enables him to solve a problem in describing the social lives of taxi workers to his audience. Precisely because the novel's most dramatic and important scenes are laden with heterosexual desire, Coovadia's hand is forced to figure out how to add women to a fictional universe that is based on a real industry seemingly dominated by men. While Coovadia sought to add women by setting the taxi world in a university where women worked alongside men as teachers and administrators, and by casting women as daughters, wives, and lovers, SABTA's paper *Drive On* did so in a short-lived, monthly column entitled "Drive On Woman." Appearing in the years leading up to formal deregulation of the taxi industry in 1987, "Drive On Woman" profiled women who successfully balanced work as taxi owners and drivers, and as mothers and wives. While the column attempts to take second-wave feminism seriously and to make the important argument that women work in taxis too, "Drive On Woman" actually tells the reader very little about the women profiled or the work that they really do.

"Drive On Woman" tells us is the extent to which gender became an important factor in recording the history, imagining the future, and marking the achievements of what would become a booming black South African transport business at the nadir of apartheid and the height of neoliberalism. Working not only as drivers, but also as models, beauty queens, travel agents, and receptionists, women were both logistically and discursively integral to the growth of SABTA's membership, the popularization of *Drive*

On as a periodical, and to the success and longevity of the still thriving taxi industry. Thus, paying attention to the ways “Drive On Woman” deployed gender to make women’s taxi work more apparent in a moment when the taxi industry was seeking deeper ties with South Africa’s corporate elite enables us think about gender and neoliberalism in the Global South as we look at specific transport work. Moreover, because we see the desire to add women to narratives of the taxi industry in the black press and in novels, this paper opens up opportunities to bring different methods and sources to the study of transport in a global perspective.

Precisely because historians and geographers have not paid much attention to the ways the taxi industry has tried to understand and market itself in neoliberal South Africa, studies on taxis have ignored archival traces like “Drive On Woman,” emphasizing the roles of cisgender men instead. There have, however, been a few studies on women in the taxi industry.⁴⁴¹ Khosa figured the number of women taxi drivers in Gauteng and Durban between 7% and 10% of all drivers.⁴⁴² Khosa used the scant numbers to tell the story of women who took up driving lessons to make income after being forcibly removed from their homes.⁴⁴³ These women struggled to thrive at the ranks where much of the discussions were anti-woman. Women taxi drivers found that they needed male brokers – usually lovers or family members – to support them on a daily basis, as well as to help shield them from the poor treatment from their taxi owning and operating peers. Much like the prostitutes in Nairobi, women never worked as taxi

⁴⁴¹ This has also been the case for fiction in recent years. Imraan Coovadia, *The Institute for Taxi Poetry* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Umuzi Press, 2013).

⁴⁴² Meshack M Khosa, "Sisters of Slippery Wheels: Women Taxi Drivers in South Africa," *Transformation* 33, no. 1 (1997): 21.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 22.

drivers forever in South Africa.⁴⁴⁴ Instead, they used revenue as seed money either for other ventures or to pass on their business to loved ones or colleagues they trusted. In many of these instances, Khosa's interviewees became drivers because of financial hardship.

Women's labor histories of transport have illuminated one subset of gendered taxi drivers's experiences, but few scholars have paid attention to how gendering taxi history sheds light on the global character of paratransit. Instead, scholars have often absorbed women's experiences into the stories of hardship that have compelled nearly all drivers to do their best work driving. For example, Khosa differentiated the histories of women and men drivers as follows. While financial hardships coerced women into driving taxis, Khosa explained, while many men entered the industry willingly.⁴⁴⁵ However, in juxtaposing the stories of men and women drivers, Khosa could not make adequate sense of one of his interviewer's testimonies. Vumani's story diverged significantly from the others. While many women abandoned taxi driving as soon as they could make different substantial contributions to their households as mothers or as married women, Khosa described Vumani's success in the taxi industry as one that came "at a great personal price."⁴⁴⁶ Unlike many of the women Khosa interviewed, Vumani never married or had

⁴⁴⁴ African women's labor history has shown that women had fluid labor roles in and outside of the home. While 19th century observers of African life saw prostitution as a static occupation that emerged as a result of patriarchal control in urbanizing environments, Luise White revealed more nuanced understanding of women as seasonal urban sex workers who responded to rural family challenges in the age of colonization. Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁴⁴⁵ Khosa, "Sisters of Slippery Wheels: Women Taxi Drivers in South Africa," 29-30.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

children. Instead, Khosa explained, “Vumani had to negotiate, adapt, and transform gender relations in order to survive in a male-dominated taxi industry.”⁴⁴⁷

While Vumani’s experience sheds light on one important aspect of the taxi industry’s ability to reshape women’s gender roles in society, it does not account for women as passengers, who played large roles in bus boycotts and other measures that resisted the apartheid state’s strategies to provide transport as a cover to the processes of displacement and dispossession that were so central to its social engineering project. Recent ethnographic work on taxi queens, however, illuminates the perspectives of sex workers, male taxi drivers’ girlfriends, and the respectable women passengers who see drivers’ “wicked” women⁴⁴⁸ associates as signs of the declining moral order the taxi industry itself encapsulates for many public onlookers.

The literature on the relationships young Coloured women in the Western Cape pursue with older male taxi drivers illuminated more recently the gendered blank entrepreneurs attempt to amass in plying a driving route for cash. Like Luise White’s work on colonial Nairobi, the literature on ‘taxi queens’ has had to contend with critics that do not see sex workers as worthy of sustained critical analysis. Taxi queens, according to Cheryl Potgieter, Anna Strebel, Tamara Shefer, and Claire Wagner, are “young women who travel with older mini-bus taxi drivers, and are thought to have sex with them in exchange for gifts and money.”⁴⁴⁹ They also call taxi queens a “stigmatized

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Dorothy Louise Hodgson and Sheryl McCurdy, *"Wicked" Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2001).

⁴⁴⁹ Cheryl Potgieter et al., "Taxi 'Sugar Daddies' and Taxi Queens: Male Taxi Driver Attitudes Regarding Transactional Relationships in the Western Cape, South Africa," *Journal of Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS* 9, no. 4 (2012): 193.

identity.” The term “taxi queen is a ‘derisory label frequently mentioned with pity, amused contempt, or scandalized disdain by the people who work at the ranks,” they explain.⁴⁵⁰ Rather than reveal the sexual relationships between older men and younger women, which often have a character of material exchange, as necessarily exploitative, Tamara Shefer and Anna Strebel add nuance to popular discussions about ‘sugar daddy’ taximen and their ‘taxi queen’ subordinates, which automatically portray taximen as perpetrators and their girlfriends as victims or survivors. Theirs and Potgieter’s work on taxi queens show how poor black women and girls in the Western Cape pursue sexual relationships with taximen for social mobility.⁴⁵¹ In addition to material benefits, Shefer and Strebel show that young women attain emotional support in the forms of interpersonal relationships and drugs and alcohol by pursuing senior men who drive taxis. “Relationships with taxi drivers were not only experienced as transactional in nature,” Shefer and Strebel explain, “but could also involve various forms of emotional intimacy.”⁴⁵² The ways Potgieter et al describe the nature of transactional sex in 21st century South Africa is similar to the place of luxury automobiles in 20th century cityscapes. Transactional sex, they explain, “is not sex work in the traditional sense, nor only an outcome of poverty, but is also fueled by consumerist pressures to acquire goods and social status, as well as linked with culturally-based notions of gender, love and exchange.”⁴⁵³ For many heterosexual taxi drivers, access to sex with young women

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 197.

⁴⁵¹ Tamara Shefer and Anna Strebel, "Deconstructing the ‘Sugar Daddy’: A Critical Review of the Constructions of Men in Intergenerational Sexual Relationships in South Africa," *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 25, no. 4 (2012).

⁴⁵² Ibid., 59.

⁴⁵³ Potgieter et al., 193.

(particularly, taxi queens) was a reason to make money driving in order to buy young women gifts. Nearly half of Potgieter's respondents agreed, "if a girl gets gifts from taxi drivers, she can't refuse to have sex with him."⁴⁵⁴ The strength of Shefer and Strebel's analytical lens is the attention to the perspectives of senior men in intergenerational or transactional sex relationships. "When we do hear about older male investments in such relationships," Shefer and Strebel write, "it is usually through the perspective of the younger women and/or boarder community constructions."⁴⁵⁵ Part of the weakness of the taxi queen literature is how the focus on heterosexual relationships – despite how nuanced – frames how gender transgression come out of the relationships of power that make taxi entrepreneurship work in the first place. Moreover, by illuminating the ways older taximen take advantage of younger women to extract wealth in sex,⁴⁵⁶ they miss the opportunity to examine how "hyper (hetero) sexuality" and material paternalism mirror relationships of power outside the realm of sexuality, but also in politics.⁴⁵⁷ Lost in every discussion of taxi queens is the how minibus' particular political history is entangled with the specific regions' (most notably the Western Cape) histories of displacement and dispossession that make the spaces minibus taxis engage particularly suitable for transactional and intergenerational sex. In other words, it's not clear from the literature on taxi queens the extent to which taxis themselves figure into the nature of transactional

⁴⁵⁴ This was clearly an unpopular opinion, seeing as 46.2% disagreed with this statement on the questionnaire Potgieter provided to respondents. Ibid., 195.

⁴⁵⁵ Shefer and Strebel, 60.

⁴⁵⁶ I'm reminded of Janelle Monae's definition of sex in the song "Screwed," included in her recent album *Dirty Computer* (2018). "See, everything is sex / Except sex, which power / You know power is just sex / You screw me and I'll screw you too / (Repeat) / Now ask yourself who's screwing you."

⁴⁵⁷ Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986).

and intergenerational sex in the Western Cape. How are taxi queens different from young women in a church congregation to pursue relationships with married ministers for gifts from this world and the next?

In a long historical context whereby black people have been dispossessed of property and displaced from lands they call home, couldn't the relationships between taxi queens and sugar daddies be non-state sanctioned site that facilitates opportunities for repossession and replacement? There is something about paying closer to gendered that opens up what repossession and replacement looks like. For taxi queens, according to Potgieter et al and Shefer and Strebel, the relationships they seek out with taxi drivers, who have a long history of using neoliberal capitalism to "take back" property and goods that apartheid legally stole from them, might be attractive precisely because dispossession and displacement never went away with apartheid. Taxi queens signal another manifestation of the lengths to which dispossessed and displaced people go, however problematic, to have things and a place of their own. Mamphela Raphele was one of the firsts to show how migrant laborers had things and a place of their own in even the direst circumstances displaced and dispossessed people live in.⁴⁵⁸

Taking my cue from this evocative suggestion, my thesis's final contribution to rethinking the making of South Africa's taxis by centering dispossession and displacement study is also to gender taxi history using queer and performance theory. Vumani bucked the trend of women taxi drivers who emphasized their roles as respectable mothers or daughters, *and* taxi drivers. Taxi queens, too, reveal both the

⁴⁵⁸ Mamphela Ramphele, *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993).

limits of respectability on the space of taxis, as well as perspectives of subjects who transgress. The taxi industry's ability to uphold women's gender roles was rooted black capitalism's neoliberal ideals. When viewed through the same neoliberal lens, what brings the men and women taxi drivers' stories together is hardship. In other words, "they either were retrenched or could not find an alternative employment," Khosa explains.⁴⁵⁹ However, for all, driving taxis seemed to cost drivers their relationships with their families or lovers. Hardship narratives flattened women's stories into men's, and illuminates very little on what underlines the gendered experience of transport writ large. To understand what drivers like Vumani and passengers like taxi queens needed to do to "negotiate, adapt, and transform gender relations" in "a male-dominated taxi industry," my study centers the polyvalent performances gender non-conforming South Africans employed to "survive" the taxi histories unfolding around them. Considering transport is about ensuring livelihoods both for those driving and those using taxis, Sara Ahmed's contention: "feminism is lived as much as it's theorized" is the more appropriate lens through which we can better understand gendered experiences in the taxi industry.⁴⁶⁰ Moreover, my study shows that one cannot understand the history of taxis without understanding the history of sexuality alongside gender in South Africa. In so doing, my thesis illuminates the experiences of lesbian, gay, transgender, intersex, and queer South Africans on taxis.

Usually when reformists introduce "gender" to "rethink" policies that aren't working, it's to recognize that women have as much value as men in making sure the

⁴⁵⁹ Khosa, "Sisters of Slippery Wheels: Women Taxi Drivers in South Africa," 31.

⁴⁶⁰ Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).

policies work. The purpose of my study is to show that reform policies like “providing better transportation” obscure why transportation is bad in the first place. Providing transport for poor women in cities where the poor have unequal access to sustain basic livelihoods only increases the burden on people who are the most marginalized, and does so only to justify their marginalization.⁴⁶¹ This is not to take anything away from the ways people use transport to resist oppression. Stories of coercion and resistance are both needed to interrogate histories of transportation. My point is we shouldn’t lose sight of the fact that their very desire to resist is only necessary because there’s oppression. Racism made dreams of a future without racism just as much as the dreamers did.

Similar to the idea that Gendering Taxis does not simply mean including women’s experiences in a mainly male industry, Queering Paratransit does not simply mean including the experiences of gays, lesbians, bisexual, transgender, and queer South Africans’ in an industry that confers status upon heterosexuals. Part of the reason the taxi queen literature did not ask how re/dispossession and re/displacement figured into the relationships vulnerable young women sought out with more senior men who drove taxis was because that literature was concerned with identifying particular behaviors of specific groups of people – namely, and perhaps pejoratively, “sugar daddies” and “taxi queens.” Queering Paratransit alongside Gendering Taxis means mapping the various structures that make the industry work smoothly, while recognizing that taxis only help

⁴⁶¹ This is my reading of the following article, not what the authors set out to accomplish with their paper. My critique is not meant to undercut the work the authors have done, or to deny the real fact that women in developing world contexts deserve greater access to resources. My point is that focusing on contemporary fixes to transport problems ignores the long history of dispossession that made transport a necessity in the very first place. Turner and Fouracre. A similar point was made by Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The First White President," *The Atlantic* 2017. *ibid*.

facilitate apartheid's social engineering project when they, in actuality, do run smoothly.⁴⁶² In other words, a well-oiled taxi industry in 20th century South Africa helped lubricate apartheid's rhythm – dispossessing people of land and property, creating white cities in their stead, forcibly relocating dispossessed people in makeshift locations, and either providing modes of transport (for a price) to help service white cities by extracting labor from dispossessed and displaced people, or leaving transport to dispossessed and displaced people's own devices. While black-owned minibus taxis provided dispossessed and displaced peoples a way to work,⁴⁶³ they only helped apartheid's rhythm of dispossession and displacement thrive.

While *Gendering Taxis* sheds light on how politics between men and women, young and old, made dispossessed and displaced people complicit in apartheid's dispossession and displacement rhythms, *Queering Paratransit* means identifying and illuminate improvisational and off-beat rhythms that disrupt the system of dispossession and displacement that makes apartheid's system of transport work in the first place. The most radical off-beat and improvisational rhythms reverse apartheid travel travails, and opens up space for dispossessed and displaced people to recover what apartheid lawfully stole from them and their relatives and ancestors. Recalling the title of the 1988

⁴⁶² Inherent to taxis' horizontal operation structure, to put it differently, are what African queer theorist Osinubi calls "queer valences." For Osinubi, "[valence] revokes the uses of the word in chemistry when it describes the capacity of elements for bond formation by attracting or repelling other elements." Like building some networks and severing others to ensure a taxi business is forever dynamic and adaptable, queer valences allows Osinubi and other African Queer Theorists to accept important pre-colonial aspects of African indigenous knowledge while rejecting colonial-era homophobias. Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi, "Queer Prolepsis and the Sexual Commons: An Introduction," *Research in African Literatures* 47, no. 2 (2016): vii.

⁴⁶³ This reminds me of the old black Christian adage whereby some spiritual being provides "a way when there was no way."

documentary about the role of black South African music in apartheid-era townships and hostels, queer taxis' "rhythms of resistance" asks us to pose new questions about commuting/travelling subjects who refuse to be deprived of place and possession, and, rather, take up space in the dispossession and displacement rhythms' interstices.⁴⁶⁴ To see what out-of-sync rhythms exist within the ones that made apartheid work requires that we examine closely how paratransit works and identify (or imagine) practices that either challenge apartheid transport or make apartheid's dispossession and displacement rhythms untenable.

Precisely because completely reversing the decades it took to dispossess and displace people of color under apartheid takes an entire social movement, the mechanisms dispossessed and displaced people employ to contest systemic oppression are often small, ephemeral, performative, and simultaneously personal and political. Sometimes the powerless are much more cognizant of these forms of resistance than the powerful.⁴⁶⁵ Taking a cue from Belinda Bozzoli's nuanced look at the anti-apartheid movement as a collection of "theaters" throughout South Africa, my thesis brings in U.S.-based queer people of color theories to show how individual "acts" in all sorts of transport modes were able to make any further dispossession and displacement more difficult.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁴ Again, I am reminded of the slaves who jumped from the ships; slaves who chose death over bondage; slaves who continue to figure into the imagination of dispossessed and displaced people in literature, popular culture, and collective memory. See Ryan Coogler, "Black Panther," (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2018).

⁴⁶⁵ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁴⁶⁶ Bozzoli.

Crucial to this intellectual work is recognizing and interrogating all different kinds and forms of spectatorship and subjectivity. In *Disidentifications*, José Muñoz shows how gender and sexual minorities use theater to discuss controversial identity politics in code. Focusing on Marga Gomez's 1992 performance art piece, *Marga Gomez Is Pretty, Witty, and Gay*, Muñoz explains why representation matters for queer subjects. "Her performance permits the spectator, often a queer who has been locked out of the halls of representation or rendered a static caricature there," Muñoz writes, "to imagine a world where queer lives, politics and possibilities in their complexity."⁴⁶⁷ In the next section, I illuminate the work of Athi Patra Ruga, a performance artist. Building on Bozzoli and Muñoz, it is no wonder Athi inserted the character Beiruth's lone body into a taxi rank. "Solo performances," Muñoz explains, "speaks to the reality of being queer at this particular moment."⁴⁶⁸ The queer audience member is drawn importantly into solo performances, creating a particular sort of identification because they "permit the spectator," Muñoz explains, "to imagine a world where queer lives, politics, and possibilities are representable in their complexity... offer[ing] the minoritarian subject a space to situate itself in history and thus seize social agency."⁴⁶⁹ Queerness within the space of subject and spectator, therefore, has the potential to contest the majority subjects and spectators in the theatre that replays the rhythms of displacement and dispossession that is central to how South Africa rolled out public transport for black South Africans and people of color over the 20th century. Performance, Muñoz shows, allows queer

⁴⁶⁷ José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications : Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, ed. George Yúdice, Jean Franco, and Juan Flores, vol. 2, Cultural Studies of the Americas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 1.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

subjects and spectators, again, “to situate itself in history and thus seize social agency,” in a context that attempted to dispossess black people of both.

By traveling queerly, commuters are able to “disidentify” with the rhythms that tap out dispossession and displacement, making space to reclaim and resituate their bodies in history and new histories of transport in South Africa, a place whose public transport commuting workforce continues to witness the consequences of settler colonialism in their everyday lives. “Disidentification,” Muñoz theorizes, “is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negate the phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasms of normative citizenship.”⁴⁷⁰ Such “citizenship” in a 20th century South African context meant complicity in being dispossessed and displaced. This is not to say that communities never contested these rhythms. What disidentification does prioritize, however, are the ways subjects refuse the narratives that maintain their subjection (or, in Muñoz’s words, “minoritarian” status). This is partly why I find queer theory useful for imagining new ways of repossession and replacement that do not automatically reproduce formulations of place and possession, both of which, in a 20th century South African context, uphold a kind of black subjectivity whereby black people may be moved at will, depleted of place, and robbed of possession. The weakness of Muñoz’s formulation is its inability to consider the visible ways subjects like South Africa’s commuting workforce resisted “the cultural logics of heteronormativity, white supremacy, and misogyny [that] undergird state power.”⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 5.

South Africa saw bus boycotts and bus burnings, and these were acts of resistance that need to be counted, remembered, and debated. However, there have been few attempts to explore the subtle and performative disidentificatory logics. This is precisely the space in the literature that my thesis' epilogue hopes to fill.

Queer(y)ing Taxi Historiography

Queering paratransit reconsiders the entire story of South Africa's taxis by rethinking the fundamental characteristics that set re/dispossession and re/displacement in motion: place and possession. As an analytical category, "place" disadvantages subjects who refuse any sense of boundedness to space-based identification. Even as queer subjects make attempts to claim space to express their gendered, raced, sexed, abled self, they know full well that they will never belong. "Possession," as an analytical category, privileges cisgender heterosexual men who are entitled to property, in the western neoliberal imaginary at least. The problem with replacement is not who puts what where, but the assumption that things necessarily belong anywhere. Apartheid is an idea founded on a deeply colonial understanding of place. The homelands, black spots, and townships were all designed to keep black South Africans in place, and exclude black South Africans' designated space-based identities from any citizenship rights. Possession, similarly, tells the story of South Africa, and the turn of the century made this perfectly clear with the contests over the Transvaal.

Histories of taxis that view the dispossession/displacement and repossession/replacement stories as equal and opposite have tended to ignore or despise the wide diversity of figures in the taxi story. Karol Boudreaux, for example, went

through great lengths in "Taxing Alternatives" to elaborate the positive structures of repossession and replacement in the taxi industry as a way to suggest recommendations for combatting the issue of unemployment and economic decline after apartheid. That reading of taxi history is symptomatic not only of something like Vusi Shongwe's insistence on the value of the taxi revolution in helping to alleviate the plights of some dispossessed and displaced people, but also of a particular reading of the postapartheid that renders South Africa and anti-apartheid nationalism as simply a story where something strange went wrong in an otherwise noble, normative path. Even though Boudreaux's study was attempting to do something very different than the World Bank's program of structural adjustment – instead of seeing the past as something of a complete failure, she looked to the past for potential answers with romantic longing – both Boudreaux and the World Bank asked the same question of African history: Why did the revolutions that African nationalisms promised fail? By inserting a particular, problematic taxi story into this question, Boudreaux was only left with the promises and tropes of neoliberalism as a way of thinking about how South Africans might be better rooted in place and possession in order to function in a globalizing country. It is precisely these concerns, conceptualizations of the potential of capitalism and nationalism together, and framings of the taxi revolution story as an uncomplicated archive of possible solutions to endemic economic inequality that push questions of gender and sexual justice to the wayside.

While Mutongi's (2017) *Matatu* did not pose questions about whether or not *matatu* men saw their entrepreneurial activities through the framework of repossession and replacement, it did open up questions about the extent to which *matatus* were

revolutionary in the ways SABTA, for example, saw minibus taxis transforming everyday black life. Sure, there were several constraints that *matatus* overcame by providing transport for dispossessed and displaced people, but were their activities ever perfectly transgressive? If so, when were they transgressive? And if they never were, do they have the potential to become so, or are they forever vertically and horizontally aligned with others' interests? In discussing informal transport's organizational structures, Cervero praises *matatus*' horizontal frame. Rather than having operations dictated from above, informal transport depends on networks, or what Cervero names as, "carefully cultivated linkages and nurtured relationships among stakeholders, including fellow operators, parts suppliers, local police, creditors, and street hustlers."⁴⁷² While informal transport may seem unorganized on the surface, Cervero explains, they are tightly organized by cooperating route associations who regulate "market entry, indemnification, pricing, service practices, and [vehicle] fitness."⁴⁷³ Despite the potential Cervero sees for forms of paratransit to transcend the constraints uneven development placed upon its drivers, and despite the complexity of their horizontal organization, vehicles like *matatus* and minibus taxis were and are still seen as the problem of the road and all sorts of social ills.

With the intention of thinking through the lessons that the history and historiography of South Africa's taxi industry offer in helping to launch a critique of neoliberalism (rather than reinscribe its tropes and paradigms) and bring queer subjectivities back into the fold through the idea of failure, this final part takes taxi

⁴⁷² Cervero, *Informal Transport in the Developing World*, 44.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 52.

history in a different direction. In particular, I want to think imaginatively, rather than simply historically, to recognize that the taxi industry's drive for repossession and replacement wasn't ever foolproof. This means that those championing the repossession and replacement story of South Africa's minibus taxis created achievement expectations that were so lofty, that failure looked like taxi businesses going bust, and not at all taxi businesses attempting to destroy each other. Thus, reorienting the framing question about taxi history (that is, why did the black taxi revolution turn into the "black-on-black" taxi wars?) enables us to come up with different questions about the story of dispossession, displacement, repossession, and replacement in taxi history. Endeavoring to answer these new questions also means taking seriously the continuing critiques of apartheid, the founding fictions of race, and African nationalism, and bring these postcolonial concerns in conversation with new archives like queer art and activism.⁴⁷⁴ And answering these questions correctly might bring us closer to new 21st century opportunities for repossession and replacement, particularly ones that are inclusive of the most vulnerable gender and sexual minorities.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ Premesh Lalu raised the question about "anxious" anti-colonial revolutions in our reading of David Scott's *Conscripts of Modernity* in the postcolonialism reading group at the CHR in September 2013. After much discussion about the intervention Scott attempts to make with his restudy of C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins*, Lalu made the argument that the postapartheid present demands a reading of nationalism that is not only complimentary to the resistance narrative of the struggle, but that also displaces it – a reading that "inhabits the anxiety that emerges when the nationalism that is promised fails." My thanks to Premesh and the postcolonialism reading group at the CHR for helping me think along these lines.

⁴⁷⁵ On a final note before proceeding, I want to emphasize that I do not think the research that I have just reviewed was wrong or that the archives I used to construct the taxi story of repossession and replacement should never be used. But I want to use this section of the thesis as a way to answer the call of David Scott and postcolonial theory, and to ask if the postapartheid present (particularly the ways in which we are inscribed in a neoliberal world order) does not demand a deep consideration of the postcolonial and a move to ask

In *After the Car*, Dennis and Urry argue that the 21st century will witness a new car age. “The [current] car system,” Dennis and Urry explain, “is based upon 19th century technologies of steel bodies and internal combustion engines, showing how old technologies can remarkably endure.”⁴⁷⁶ They name the new system, the “socio-technical” one.⁴⁷⁷ The factor ushering in the socio-technical age of the car, they explain, is climate change. Oceanic human settlements would disappear if the west Antarctic ice sheet and Greenland’s ice cap melted. Climate change, I would add, also has the potential to usher in a new era of dispossession and displacement, and one that would adversely affect people of color and people in the global South more than anywhere else. While Dennis and Urry suggest that connecting human activities (particularly ones with the largest carbon footprints) to digital information systems will be crucial to the new car system ahead. The second problem deals with the economic and political fallout when oil becomes too scarce to be affordable. Cars consume half of all the oil the entire world produces – “about 20 percent of *all energy consumption*,” they write.⁴⁷⁸

While Dennis and Urry contend, “the twentieth century is reaping its revenge upon the twenty-first century and limiting the choices and opportunities that are available,” I hope to remind us of coeval historical precedents, particularly those borne

different questions about the history of displacement/replacement and dispossession/repossession in the taxi industry. My contribution to Scott’s claim is there is something about the work of queer African thinkers and practitioners like Keguro Macharia, Zethu Matebeni, and Athi-Patra Ruga, and queer people of color scholars like José Esteban Muñoz and Jesús Estrada-Pérez that can aid in this project.

⁴⁷⁶ Dennis and Urry, *After the Car*, 2.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Dennis and Urry, *After the Car*, 17. See also the literature on the Anthropocene: Tom Cohen, ed. *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change, Vol. 1* (Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2012); Joanna Zylinska, *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene* (Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2014).

out of colonization.⁴⁷⁹ Dennis and Urry put so much emphasis on the 20th century because the automobile, shortly after its introduction to the world, they explain, “enable[ed] car drivers to develop their *own* time tabling of social life,” rather than simply relying on the limits other people and institutions placed upon them.⁴⁸⁰ And in so doing, they provide a wonderful history of how the car became a fundamental, albeit taken-for-granted, feature of social life.⁴⁸¹ They explain that the internal combustible engine only became widely accepted in 1895, after a race for safe combustible power was secured in 1895.⁴⁸² However, the world had seen similar disruptions of social life in Europe’s colonial project. Moreover, in fact, the materials (ex. rubber from the Congo) and industrialization processes that made the development of automobile technologies possible were themselves based on colonialism.

Normative Visions of Transport and the Radical Nature of Queer Storytelling

I implore the reader to imagine a typical minibus taxi commute in one of South Africa’s cities: Cape Town. This may mean engaging in memory work, inhabiting another skin (in the way that the puppeteer does in the film *Being John Malkovich*, “It’s the idea of being someone else / Feeling what they feel / Seeing what they see”), or even the work of fiction.⁴⁸³ As I learned through ethnographic fieldwork in the taxi rank at the

⁴⁷⁹ Dennis and Urry, *After the Car*, 12.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 27-46.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 30.

⁴⁸³ Charlie Kaufman and Spike Jonze, “Being John Malkovich,” (1999). It has been common for researchers and creative writers to explore South African taxis from a literary standpoint in the aftermath of the taxi rush (1985-2005) and the most violent taxi wars (1990-1994). For example, see Imraan Coovadia, *The Institute for Taxi Poetry* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Umuzi Press, 2013); Hedley Twidle and Sean Christie,

Cape Town Civic Centre, the rules of taking a taxi from the taxi rank are fairly straightforward. You find your route (there's typically a sign overhead), queue for an open seat, wait for the taxi to fill with 15 other commuters, pay your fare, and you are on your way. We might think of this as a normative experience because it is (re)productive in fundamental ways. The taxi commute generates revenue for the operator. It enables the commuter to travel to work and make ends meet for the family. It transports the commuter to the grocery store, the shopping mall, a friend or relative's. And if we think about the narrative of struggle in which the taxi has been placed, the taxi could transport comrades and activists to a camp or political rally, and indeed has had the potential to drive the movement. *Sithutha Isizwe* ("We carry the nation"), the 1980s motto of the Southern African Black Taxi Association (SABTA), applies. It is also worth taking a moment to imagine who your peers may be in the commute – what they look like, how they are dressed, the expressions on their faces, their mannerisms, what you or anyone else might be thinking (or perhaps even the overall mood when the nosy American researcher asks questions about what is going on in this moment while taking copious notes and recording seemingly inconsequential sounds). In other words, it is easy and almost attractive to view the spaces that taxis inhabit as well as the habitation of taxi space fundamentally as a *production* with the intent of reproduction, replacement, and repossession.

The themes of reproduction, replacement, and repossession have sat too comfortably alongside the narrative of the anti-apartheid struggle for almost 30 years

"Taxi on Main," in *Cape Town: A City Imagined and the Meanings of a Place*, ed. Stephen Watson (London: Penguin Books, 2006).

now. The claim is reflected in a reading of Colleen McCaul's 1990 study *No Easy Ride*, which described the taxi industry as a triumph of black enterprise in the face of apartheid, and also in 2013, when Vusi Shongwe plead with *TaxiNdaba* magazine to convince its readers, "the taxi has contributed towards the freedom we have achieved in this country."⁴⁸⁴ Since most of what we know about taxi history contrasts transport as oppression (i.e. displacement and dispossession) with transport as resistance (i.e. replacement and repossession), what would it mean to question any one individual or community's claims to place and possession on lands deeply entwined with settler colonial modes of social engineering? And what would it mean to rethink taxi history in the midst of widespread concerns over the failures of *umzabalazo* ('the struggle against apartheid') and new calls for land expropriation.⁴⁸⁵ While the taxi elite's attempts to recover their story of revolution, repossession, and replacement in the midst of internal infighting and South Africa's political transition, I believe that now is the time to rethink the dominant taxi story and the acts that created it over time by centering ways gendered minorities use taxis today to combat the dispossession and displacement they endured at the same time taxi elites effected their own repossession and replacement.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ Colleen McCaul, *No Easy Ride: The Rise and Future of the Black Taxi Industry* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1990); "Mec Former Taxi Operator," *TaxiNdaba* October/November 2013.

⁴⁸⁵ For more of the contemporary land expropriation debate, see, for example, Marianne Merten, "South Africa Has All Legislative and Policy Tools for Land Redistribution - Politics, Patronage and Governance Paralysis Have Made It Impossible So Far," *Daily Maverick* 2018.

⁴⁸⁶ In addition to queer theory, I invoke a provocation of postcolonial theory that David Scott offered in *Conscripts of Modernity*: "Does the problem-space in which the narrative of (socialist or nationalist) liberation is constituted continue to be a problem-space whose question ought to exercise a claim on the criticism of the present?" As cities like Cape Town and Johannesburg roll out new technologies of Bus Rapid Transit – something that is viewed as the future of public transport in those cities in the global South that are still

Shedding new light on archive the remainder of “Sithutha Isizwe” uses, this section employs a critical ethnography of the author’s engagement with a video installation and performance piece in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of South Africa. An atypical perspective on taxis, Athi-Patra Ruga’s *After He Left...* follows the failed journey of Beiruth – a black gender-queer “monster,” portrayed by Ruga – through Cape Town Station’s minibus taxi rank at night. Through its analysis of the piece alongside and an interrogation of the author’s ethnographic position as American, black, cis male, student, and queer, “Queering the Ranks of Taxi History” queries how the taxi has been written into South African history, and how the dominant narrative of the minibus taxi illuminates urban public culture in South Africa over the last 30 years. While prefacing the substantive contribution of “Sithutha Isizwe,” “Queering the Ranks of Taxi History” rethinks “the black taxi revolution”⁴⁸⁷ using the theoretical tools that Beiruth and Ruga used to question the historical purpose of the taxi rank in cities like Cape Town and Johannesburg. The chapter interrogates how history is performed in South African public culture and recognizes that the “problem-space” Scott identifies – that is, the opportunity to develop a critique that examines present postcolonial conditions – is, in fact, a (hetero)normative one.⁴⁸⁸

deeply divided by class and race – this chapter demands transport scholars and planners to take a step back to ask: On what historical grounds of displacement and dispossession do South Africa’s transport revolutions stand? By interrogating the collaboration between popular narrative and the production of historical knowledge about the taxi, a ‘queer’ taxi history calls into question any transport repossession and replacement scheme. David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 118.

⁴⁸⁷ Joel Barolsky, “Follow That Taxi: Success Story of the Informal Sector,” *Indicator SA* 7, no. 2 (1990).

⁴⁸⁸ For the purpose of this paper, I define “normativity” as those complex relations of power within which things (behaviors, spaces, and temporalities) become assumed to be

The rest of the section continues in the following order. It begins with a description and analysis of *After He Left...* It argues that *After He Left...* challenges the assumption that the taxi industry needs to reproduce capitalism to be successful. Thus, queering the history of the taxi enables historians to think beyond the neoliberal frameworks in which the taxi has conventionally been understood. The chapter then revisits the historiography and political economy of the taxi to show how the taxi story became fundamentally tied to the anti-apartheid struggle and global neoliberal economic tropes in the late 1990s. Doing so opens up space to examine the history of the taxi through the lens of gender and sexuality – themes that Ruga brought closer into view with the performance art piece. Together the first two sections of the chapter show that viewing taxis solely as the vehicle of choice by “comrades” or as an essential experience mode of public transport for South Africa’s poor and working-classes reproduces paradigms of resistance-through-capitalism that South Africa’s black LGBTI activists oppose.⁴⁸⁹ The first two sections of the chapter also invoke an African feminist concern that Africa’s nationalist movements too often privilege the masculine, heterosexist voice when articulating visions of decolonization.⁴⁹⁰ In so doing, many independence

normal. “Heteronormativity,” thus means the processes by which people come to mark these same things as heterosexual or tied to conventional ideas about heterosexual sex – as being reproductive and performed exclusively between one man and one woman. See Judith Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

⁴⁸⁹ Gillian Schutte, "Pride Does Justice Proud," *Mail & Guardian*, October 11 2013.

⁴⁹⁰ Teresa A Barnes, *"We Women Worked So Hard": Gender, Urbanization, and Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe, 1930-1956* (Portsmouth, N.H: Heinemann, 1999). For the related African feminist critique of western feminism see Lynn M. Thomas, *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). For the related black feminist critique of western feminism see bell hooks, "Dig Deep: Beyond *Lean In*," *The Feminist Wire*, October 28 2013.

movements throughout the continent have silenced women and sexual minorities in building the nation – in part because of the gender-based violence that colonialism inflicted.⁴⁹¹ Building on Beiruth, Ruga, and queer and feminist African scholars’ insights, the chapter argues that queering the ranks of taxi history both enables an analysis of taxi through the lens of gender and sexuality, and also urges us to ask how ‘revolutionary’ was “the black taxi revolution.”

The remainder concludes with a reflection of how *After He Left...* challenges “Sithutha Isizwe” and related historical writings of Africa in the aftermath of South African apartheid. The conclusion articulates the author’s complex engagement with the piece as a historical source because both the form of the piece (a video installation whose sound is only accessible through a pair of headphones in the otherwise silent National Gallery – a solitary experience) and its content (the queer black body of a performance artist and the gaze of a video camera inhabiting a normative, masculinist space) prompts a particular sense of anxiety that has begs artists, activists, audiences, and researchers to pause, think, reflect and (possibly) act. Importantly, the chapter’s conclusion shows that the same anxiety that has impressed itself upon my intellectual project has also shaped the concerns of the minibus taxi’s middle-class operators. The aim of the opening chapter is to encourage historians to inhabit archives as queer – regardless of sexual orientation – as a way to avoid reproducing strict apartheid categories of race, gender, and sexuality.⁴⁹² What becomes clearer as the chapter proceeds from beginning to end are the ways

⁴⁹¹ Marc Epprecht, *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa* (Montreal: McGill/Queens University Press, 2005).

⁴⁹² Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa: Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts*, (HSRC Press, 2009).

‘movement’, ‘timeline’, ‘abandonment’, and ‘displacement’ loom throughout both the analysis of *After He Left...*, as well as the entire “Sithutha Isizwe” project.

On a final note, I admit the usual location of the term “queer” in the Global North, particularly the United States. Yet, I still want to advocate that we take up the term as a way of encompassing those positionalities and intersections that defy normative codes of gender and sexuality. But I also want to proceed with some caution. As David Valentine argues, "despite the collectivity and inclusivity implied by th[e] use of [terms such as] 'transgender' [and even 'queer'], its employment in institutionalized contexts cannot account for the experiences of the most socially vulnerable gender-variant people."⁴⁹³ Thus, when transposing Valentine's argument to the South African context, there is a way in which I wanted the paper to avoid uncritically applying the term "queer" to the One in Nine and the Forum for the Empowerment of Women campaigners who sought to bring issues of corrective rape and gender-based violence, particularly against black lesbians, to the Johannesburg Gay & Lesbian Pride agenda in 2012 – a moment that prompted important local activism and discussions about race and class in the LGBTI community.⁴⁹⁴ At the same time, I value what the term queer does to foreground *intersectionality* (or in Valentine's understanding, "a way of recognizing that being a social woman must necessarily be configured by intersections of race, class position, cultural background or location in a stratified global economy") and to critique and dissemble *normativity* as a way to reimagine the *social worlds* of taxis (the people who

⁴⁹³ David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 14.

⁴⁹⁴ Hegenveld and Tallie, ""This Is My Route!" Race, Entitlement and Gay Pride in South Africa."; Schutte, "Pride Does Justice Proud."

engage and talk about them) as well as the *epistemes* (the archive) that we use to write history.⁴⁹⁵ In other words, coming to terms with the intersections of race and class within my own intellectual biography and in the production of a research question has demanded me to ask how being queer, as much as being a particular modern subject implicated in a neoliberal order, has also impressed upon my object of study. And in so doing, I stumbled upon *After He Left...*, something that has actually brought me closer to the project of retelling the taxi story against the grain of neoliberalism.

Athi-Patra Ruga's Queer Taxi History

In *After He Left* Ruga transforms the terrains on which the taxi has been normalized as a productive entity. Moreover, Ruga asks what happens when the queer body engages this familiar scene in our imagination. Upon reflection, I now recognize that Ruga's queer intervention was precisely what drew me to the piece. As I will show, *After He Left* critically reimagines the taxi by queering the time in which the commuter commutes. Through performance, Ruga compels us to ask what might happen if a taxi never takes off, considering that it is unconventional to think of a taxi that goes nowhere. Thus, I find the questions that *After He Left* raises inspiring, if not instructive in helping me interrogate the paradigms which have constrained the history and historiography of the taxi in the postapartheid. Combined with an elaboration on the points above, this section and the next will argue that *After He Left* directs our attention to the ways the dominant taxi story has submerged any critique of its fundamental narrative, and in the

⁴⁹⁵ This argument is explored in Valentine as well as Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

process, displaced questions of gender and sexuality. In the place of addressing social concerns, the production of taxi history emphasized a desire to run a business that was sustainable at the very same moment neoliberal global capitalism engaged the world.

Cape Town and Johannesburg-based Athi-Patra Ruga won the prestigious 2015 Standard Bank Young Artist Award for performance art.⁴⁹⁶ Ruga's work blends fashion, performance, and photography as a way to make statements about race, gender, and sexuality, usually by subverting these categories to provoke the audience.⁴⁹⁷ Ruga does this by engaging the definitive spaces of apartheid, usually in costume and as a character. Hailing originally from Umtata in the Eastern Cape, Ruga has shown in the fashion capitals of the world, including Moscow, New York, Berlin, Paris, and Milan. At only 30-years old, Ruga is truly a global sensation. And like the very idea of a “black taxi revolution” did for me 11 years ago, Ruga inspires ethnographers to engage questions of situatedness and intersectionality in their scholarship.

After He Left opens with a frame of the setting – Cape Town's City Centre taxi rank (my first ethnographic research site) at night.⁴⁹⁸ Even though the piece officially begins with this frame, the audience may witness the narrative at a different moment, depending on when they stumble across the piece or pick up the headphones to listen in on a performance that has already been set in motion. In a sense, the very act of engaging the work reflects what Halberstam defines as queer: “the non-normative logics and organization of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and

⁴⁹⁶ National Arts Festival, "Standard Bank Young Artist Award 2015 - Athi-Patra Ruga (Performance Art)," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6vz5O-N91Y>.

⁴⁹⁷ Siegenthaler, "Visualizing the Mental City: The Exploration of Cultural and Subjective Topographies by Contemporary Performance Artists in Johannesburg."

⁴⁹⁸ Athi-Patra Ruga, *After He Left*, 2009. Solo exhibition. YOUNGBLACKMAN gallery.

time.”⁴⁹⁹ Veiled in a cream lampshade headpiece decorated in colorful light bulbs, Ruga’s character Beiruth enters the frame of the taxi rank solemnly. Beiruth meanders about seamlessly before engaging in some sort of nocturnal commute that never takes off. The videocamera scans Beiruth’s body, notably their⁵⁰⁰ ankles and shoes, as well as the glow of the headpiece. Spectators to the production engage the videocamera – waving at it, sometimes dancing sexually in front of it. Voices clamoring in Xhosa and other sounds of the taxi rank at night fill the audio space of the piece. By contrast, Beiruth is silent. Not even the clicks of their red high-heeled pumps disturb the familiar soundscapes of the rank – the chatter, the heckling, the revving of taxi engines...

Thus, the artist enters this space, the event of the taxi commute profoundly queer. In other words, Beiruth occupies a normative place in what Halberstam calls “queer time.” Beiruth’s “move” to go nowhere reveals their “commute” as one of “those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance.”⁵⁰¹ Thus, Beiruth’s “commute” is an anti-capitalist one. After meandering the taxi rank and drawing stares from the spectators there and from the audience through the videocamera lens, Beiruth sits comfortably in the harlequin getup of a harlot on an empty bench – the same on which typical commuters wait until the taxi’s arrival.⁵⁰² Against the imagination of a normative commute, Beiruth displaces normative gender assignments around labor,

⁴⁹⁹ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 6.

⁵⁰⁰ I use the personal pronouns of they, them, and their to refer to Beiruth, and in order to emphasize their gender-neutrality and queer subjectivity.

⁵⁰¹ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 6.

⁵⁰² My thanks to Katie McKeown for directing me to the analysis of spectatorship and the videocamera lens.

forcing the audience to think about this space outside the paradigm of work – the assumed masculine counterpart to feminine leisure.⁵⁰³ Beiruth is neither laborer nor domestic worker; neither breadwinning mother nor father. Rather, Beiruth is a “monster” who occupies queer time in queer attire, dressed in a red leotard and white fishnet stockings – a visual discord with the taxi rank.⁵⁰⁴ But the costume’s parts are altogether eclipsed both by the lights in the headpiece and their deep dark skin, and unified only by the wide black lacquered belt around their waist.

Photographic stills of the artist foreground the frame of the taxi rank only at brief moments in the video, like flashes of time, moving between Beiruth’s body and the spectacle of the taxi rank. Thus, Beiruth is central to the setting of the piece, but is also displaced at times by the people, a sign reading "Atlantis," the empty taxi stalls, but particularly by the eerie darkness of the taxi rank, which is filled only by the sounds of the night and the dull orange florescent glow that typically turns the black city sky that particular pale brown color. (I remember this color from growing up in the Bronx.)

In the narrative of the piece, Beiruth waits for the "Atlantis" taxi to arrive. Their body sits frozen in a seated position. The only movement in the frame is performed by the lights in the lampshade headpiece and by the camera as it profiles Beiruth, then faces toward them. *After He Left...* tells and retells the story of the taxi rank in narrative montage. The taxi arrives, filling an increasingly motionless soundscape of the rank. The taxi door slides open and Beiruth boards, sitting in the front row and accompanied only by

⁵⁰³ For a detailed discussion of leisure and gender, see Laura Fair, *Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890-1945* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001).

⁵⁰⁴ Buys, "Athi-Patra Ruga and the Politics of Context."

a driver indicated by a left arm – or so the videocamera will have the audience believe. The videocamera and a host of spectators at the taxi rank watch Beiruth move from the bench, through the taxi door, and into the taxi's front row. Beiruth's white panties are revealed between the costume of fishnets and leotard in this movement.

The last frames of the taxi narrative zoom in on Beiruth's body in the front row. At first their body is obscured in darkness. Only the flickering headpiece is able to penetrate the darkness of the taxi's interior, yet the videocamera sets this moment against the pale brown of the taxi rank. The dark insides of the taxi now shut the rank out. Suddenly there appear bursts of bright light from a camera flash, which obscure the dark frame and previously obfuscated form of Beiruth. In these moments the light reveals Beiruth sitting as commuters typically do at the rank while they wait for the taxi to fill to capacity and make its way. But the only "bodies" filling the taxi are Beiruth's queer form, which begins to contort into a provocative pose, as well as the spectators at the rank who are embodied by the flash. Together these bodies serve to defy the story of the commute – the familiar apartheid story of township to town and back. And the audience can never be certain where Beiruth is going. Are they going to the magical city or the apartheid township of Atlantis? It is also unclear whether or not they make it there.

In the very last scene, the videocamera brings in the gallery audience and the taxi rank spectators to watch the spectacle, but also shuts them out from the darkness between the taxi walls. What lingers after the final frame is a penultimate flash that reveals Beiruth facing towards the videocamera with their legs spread wide open, displaying a

tucked⁵⁰⁵ crotch whose precise details are obscured by the very same illuminating flash. The taxi portion of *After He Left* thus leaves us with an event different than that of apartheid. And in that final moment, the frame cuts out before highlighting Beiruth's dangerous flirtation, which courts spectatorship and the audience into an intimate, yet unknowable space in between the legs, through a videocamera.

I want the reader to dwell on this critical moment in the piece before continuing because the epilogue of the taxi story in *After He Left*... also deserves some space. *After He Left*... is divided into two parts. The taxi rank is the setting of the first, while the next scene reveals Beiruth donning a different headpiece (the same black lacquer motorcycle helmet used in Ruga's other portraits of Beiruth). At first, Beiruth stands still with their back and the palms of their hands pressed onto the facade of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, on Buitenkant Street in Cape Town. The frame completely omits the "Universal" in the name of the church, perhaps to better demonstrate the church as a particular space and to draw the audience's attention to the heteronormative assumptions of certain Christian beliefs. And after highlighting a few cars passing by, the videocamera exposes Beiruth sneaking behind the tawdry spikes that guard the church's exterior. Beiruth then turns around and begins climbing the metal panels that line the side of the building with the soundscapes of the idle street at their back. Like in the taxi scene, the videocamera splits frames between close ups of Beiruth's attire (their headpiece, white fishnets, red leotard, and buckled black belt) and the setting (the artist slowly scaling a Pentecostal church – interrupting any sense of Christian salvation). Though each scene in

⁵⁰⁵ To "tuck" is drag queen slang, meaning to hide one's male genitalia as to give the illusion that it was never there in the first place. This act is always a failed one precisely because what lies underneath a drag queen's panties is rarely completely unknowable.

After He Left depicts distinct settings, both mark events of discord, but particularly of the shock that emerges when something queer encounters normative space. However, it is the simultaneously revealed and obscured sexual nature of the event of the flash that I want to leave the reader with as I continue to work through the piece.

On the surface *After He Left* offers both a language (i.e. aesthetics and sexuality) and a mode (i.e. performance and visibility) to think differently not only about the bodies that (can) inhabit the taxi, but also about how we move through and engage the taxi rank, the archive, and the ranks of history – that is, how history gets marshalled as a particular way to frame the present. Ruga utilizes gender non-conforming fashion and aesthetics as a way to upset the normative space and master narrative of the taxi. They dress up, pose, and displace the taxi rank to video and the gallery exhibit. For Ruga, this method has the power to intervene in spaces of capitalism and heteronormativity – spaces that are embedded by conventional capitalist understandings of the value of the taxi rank. It is unclear at the present moment whether or not Ruga's mode of "queering" points us to specific strategies to write a queer history. After all, historians do not tend to do visual art, and I certainly do not intend to use the actual methods of video installation to retell the history of the taxi. However, *After He Left* certainly signals a desire write queer histories of the present. What *After He Left* does do is allude to the way performance urges us to bear questions of gender, sexuality, and queer subjectivity not only upon new histories of the taxi, but also the very performance of historical inquiry.

The takeaway point of *After He Left* is located in the ways Ruga's piece invites both artist and audience to inhabit an event with the potential to fail. Specifically, as the title of the piece suggests, *After He Left* signals a move to recognize spaces of

abandonment and displacement in postapartheid South Africa. So when we read abandonment and displacement alongside the event of *the flash* (the sudden opening of the legs, the simultaneous exposure and obfuscation of the genitalia, the embodiment of spectatorship), then what comes into clearer view are the anxieties about sexual violence – whether they be based on race, class, gender, or sexual orientation – something that art historians have read as the most prominent theme in *After He Left*...⁵⁰⁶ Similar to conditions that made gender-based "she asked for it / skirt too short" rationales for rape possible, the normalizing patriarchies that have gone unquestioned in the development of the taxi industry and the ways patriarchy gets reinscribed in the retelling of a masculine resistance taxi narrative both have the potential to transform the event of the flash in *After He Left* into something far more insidious than flirtation. Indeed, traipsing into taxi rank at night in a gender-bending getup might raise many concerns about their safety amongst some liberal circles in Cape Town.⁵⁰⁷

Gender, Sexuality, and Queer Citizenship at the Forefront of Taxi History

Asking why gender and sexuality rarely gets talked about in the same archives that have enabled the retelling of a normative taxi story brings into clearer focus the activism of One in Nine and the Forum for the Empowerment of Women campaigners, but particularly the complex relationship between queer activism and neoliberalism. During the 2012 Johannesburg Gay and Lesbian Pride march both groups argued that the parade wasted the platform it was given and fumbled the opportunity to take an activist

⁵⁰⁶ Siegenthaler, "Visualizing the Mental City: The Exploration of Cultural and Subjective Topographies by Contemporary Performance Artists in Johannesburg."

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

stance against corrective rape and gender-based violence in South Africa. So the groups sought to recenter the issue of sexual violence and the corporatization of Pride in the 2013 People's Pride. As One in Nine organizer Kwezi Mbandazayo explained,

[People's Pride is] our move to create an alternative to the commercialized and anti-poor agenda for commercialized Pride events. From its inception as an event that celebrated political struggle and claimed space for all members of LGBTI communities, Joburg Pride became a capitalist and consumerist gay parade that took place in a predominantly white and wealthy suburb, was sponsored by multinational corporations and businesses, and became an event that only the economically wealthy sections of the LGBTI and queer communities were able to fully participate in.⁵⁰⁸

Thus, by thinking about the question of sexual violence within an intersectional framework that triangulates race, class, and gender as the basis of its activism, People's Pride was better able to expose the fictions of corporatization, a neoliberal paradigm that has shaped the dominant LGBTI resistance narrative in South Africa. When the One in Nine campaigners and the Forum for the Empowerment of Women campaigners interrupted the Pride route in 2012, and although they were treading through dangerous waters, they still took the risk of inhabiting the space of Pride. But in the end, the black lesbian campaigners were met with the fury of a race mob.⁵⁰⁹

But as Halberstam reminds us, “while failure certainly comes with a host of negative effects, such as disappointment, disillusionment, and despair, it also provides the opportunity to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life.”⁵¹⁰ Now that Ruga and other queer artists and activists have directed scholarly attention to the negative effects of normative space, it may be time to explore

⁵⁰⁸ Schutte, "Pride Does Justice Proud."

⁵⁰⁹ Maria Hegenveld and TJ Tallie, "'This Is My Route!' Race, Entitlement and Gay Pride in South Africa," *Africa is a Country*, October 15 2012.

⁵¹⁰ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 13.

how such spaces were inaugurated as a way to “poke holes” in them. And, as the minibus taxi’s success story in the 1980s suggests, Mbandazayo was correct. There are clear linkages between neoliberalism and the suppression of meaningful queer activism, and we can see all this in the historiography of the taxi.

Sithwala Isizwe: The Gendered Slogan SABTA Eschewed

The previous chapters of the thesis intentionally eschewed the very important gendered dimension of taxis. I did so in order to draw a sharp contrast between the transport history of dispossession and displacement in Cape Town and the transport history of repossession and replacement in Johannesburg, and also to highlight the new areas of inquiry that are opened up when we gender that history. At the highest levels of generalization, a gendered history of taxis questions the dominant notions of “possession” and “place” that obscure feminine and gender-fluid ways for dispossessed and displaced people to operate a taxi business or ride in taxis.

As a reminder, *Sithutha Isizwe* was not the only Zulu phrase that could have represented the post-1977 Transport Act taxi industry’s drive for repossession and replacement, but merely the one that made the most sense for the male taxi executives who struck deals with corporations and the government. Moreover, the choice SABTA made to use *Sithutha Isizwe* rather than its isiZulu synonym *Sithwala Isizwe* opens up new ways to think about South Africa’s minibus taxi history of dispossession, displacement, repossession, and displacement, but particularly through the lens of gender. While the verb *-thutha* means to move house or to carry away, convey, or transport, usually by means of a vehicle like a van or a wagon, *-thwala* means to carry on the head

or shoulders, usually with the support of the hands. On the surface, *Sithutha Isizwe* is an appropriate slogan for an industry of ‘manly’ men, primarily, who work with machines and rely on the latest transport technology to move things, people, and the ‘nation’ of *abantu abanyama* – that is, ‘black people’. Within this rationale, *Sithwala Isizwe* would seem like an odd choice for the minibus taxi industry and the heroic brand of repossession and replacement that “Looking Back” exemplified.⁵¹¹ *Sithwala Isizwe*, rather, invokes an image of women in the countryside carrying loads of maize, firewood, and water to support families. The domestic household is a different sort of ‘nation’, although no less important. Moreover, coupling *Sithwala Isizwe* with the warning “do not fight the nation” invokes a popular Zulu idiom: *-thwala amanzi ngesifuba*, which literally means to carry water by means of the chest. Precisely because women carry water on their heads and shoulders, but not their chests, the idiom warns against going against the proverbial stream, that is popular opinion. The ‘nation’ implied in *Sithutha Isizwe* is a coherent one of *ubuntu*, where men and women work together to support each other, particularly the most vulnerable. While *Sithutha Isizwe* would possibly “bring about a spirit of togetherness,” to use *Drive On*’s translation, *Sithwala Isizwe ngesifuba* (“we carry the nation on our chests”) would not just “fight the nation.” It would also tear the very fabric of the nation asunder. Carrying the nation on one’s chest also displaces men and puts women at the center of that dystopia. The choice between the two verbs, therefore, was strategic.

⁵¹¹ See the Introduction to Part II of the thesis for a summary of the “Looking Back” series and the meanings SABTA ascribed to the slogan *Sithutha Isizwe*.

While the verb *-thutha* obscures the gendered dimension of the taxi industry and women's literal and figurative role in it, *-thwala* raises questions about the extent to which gender and sexuality were central to the development of transport technologies and black capitalism in South Africa over the entire 20th century. The "Looking Back" article series overlooks gender while drawing attention to concerns about race – apartheid categories of race, to be more specific. Moreover, the gendered meaning of *-thwala* illuminates the extent to which building and supporting a 'nation' on wheels (and other components of transport technology) was about controlling wayward women working with their bodies as opposed to machines. In addition to signifying head and shoulder portage – i.e. women's work – the verb *-thwala* also means to be pregnant. While bearing children is an asset to the family, in isiZulu a woman could also bear evil spirits that transform them into conceited and even disrespectful wives, mothers, daughters, and passengers. The idioms *-thwala amaphiko*, *-thwala umhlwenga*, *-thwala ishoba*, *-thwala umsila*, *-thwala iqolo*, *-thwala ikhanda*, *-thwala ilunda*, and *-thwala amehlo* all invoke the image of these 'wicked women'.⁵¹² These women would be the equivalent of 'backseat drivers'. The verb *-thutha*, too, could describe a person who tells lies. But the idiom *-thutha izindaba* (literally, to carry stories) would probably not be used to describe a person who could bring down an entire community or household. Precisely because – *thwala* invokes the image of wicked women within a nationalist context, where 'unity' is the bottom-line value, *Sithwala Isizwe* could never be used to brand an industry that was already suffering from an image problem. That SABTA chose to use *Sithutha Isizwe* over

⁵¹² Dorothy Louise Hodgson and Sheryl McCurdy, *"Wicked" Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Oxford: Heinemann: James Currey, 2001).

its gendered counterpart is the critical (and overlooked) component of the story. This third part of the thesis uses queer people of color theories to open up *Sithwala* Isizwe, and in order to question the ways “possession” and “place” as analytical categories caused the taxi industry’s quest for repossession and replacement to betray the dispossessed and displaced feminine and queer South Africans who continue to be overlooked in 21st century public transport planning, particularly around minibus taxis.

Conclusion

By illuminating the ways taxi ranks, as legacies of the Group Areas Act, became entangled with transphobia, misogyny, heterosexism, and patriarchy through the industry’s drive for repossession and replacement, Ruga’s *After He Left...* bring into focus queer, gender non-conforming, and womyn-led critiques of the neoliberal ANC. While the One in Nine and the Forum for the Empowerment of Women collectives identified such -isms and -phobias as enabling gender-based violence, this chapter extrapolated their activism and Ruga’s performance to the larger structural failures of the ANC’s anti-apartheid revolution. It suggested that an imaginative queer taxi history might illuminate the ways both narratives of resistance and economic success (themes most central to “the black taxi revolution” story) created archives that will continue to suppress issues of gender and sexuality if we do not make some sort of an intervention. Moreover, by remaining attentive to the way neoliberalism, normativity, and the apartheid fictions of race and gender became those conditions that made the threat of abandonment and displacement through sexual violence possible, we illuminate the paradigms that enabled a legitimate taxi history to emerge. We also begin to ask different

questions of the history of the taxi. For example, to what extent did the "black taxi *revolution*" help sharpen the weapons to launch, in the words of bell hooks, "a movement to end sexism, sexual exploitation, and oppression... and to challeng[e] and dismantl[e] patriarchy?"⁵¹³ To what extent was more energy devoted to making a buck? Or how might we begin to reread the SABTA newsletter *Drive On*, the self-proclaimed "mouthpiece" of the taxi industry when it published a photograph of a dignified looking man holding in his arms a smiling woman dressed in a pink chiffon evening gown and wearing a diamond tiara, with a caption reading:

The SABTA President, Mr James Ngcoya, could not help but carry Miss SABTA, Mapaseka Mahlong, after she was pronounced the winner. Just to make sure that everything "went according to plan," the President stayed throughout the night of the contest until the judges unanimously announced that Mapaseka, who hails from Sebokeng near Vereeniging, was the 1985 SABTA queen?⁵¹⁴

There is a way in which the master narrative of dispossession/displacement and repossession/replacement that I set up in this thesis, as well as the taxi industry's strongest proponents, which I used to support my claims, continue to leave unanswered important questions about (but not exclusively concerning) gender, sexuality, and their relationship to nationalism and neoliberalism in South Africa. As I continue to build on the thesis' arguments and expand the substantive portion of the history I wrote on how dispossession/displacement and repossession/replacement made the taxi industry what it was in its revolution in the 1970s, I hope to follow the ways queer theory, postcolonial theory, and performance art are all beginning, in the post-1994 period of South Africa's history, to push scholars of apartheid space and movement to look for atypical archives

⁵¹³ hooks, "Dig Deep: Beyond *Lean In*."

⁵¹⁴ *Drive On* September 1985.

and ask questions about gender and sexuality of familiar ones, like the statistics, newspapers, and government repositories I used to write this thesis.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

Through this dissertation I have emphasized three interrelated dimensions of the history of taxis which have been understated and ignored: the dispossession and displacement of black South Africans from colonial times, and the making of a large black commuter class through the apartheid period; the replacement of buses and trains with the shared minibus taxi during the black taxi revolution after the 1976 Soweto Uprising, and a small black elite's struggle to repossess capital through the uplift of black communities; and the ways the taxi wars and neoliberal capitalism during the transition from the apartheid government to the black-led ANC constrained true repossession and replacement in the taxi industry.

Since South Africa's modern apartheid regime (1948-1994) made clear the lengths to which the powerful, driven by racism and white supremacy, will go to disenfranchise a majority black population, the history of forced removals and transportation in its two biggest cities (Cape Town and Johannesburg) offers makes it impossible to ignore how institutionalized human and environmental dispossession and displacement can make an entire network of public transport work in the first place.⁵¹⁵ On the surface, minibus taxis were just a means of transport for the poor from the late 1970s to today. When you scratch beneath the surface, however, one realizes that settler colonialism and apartheid created transport as well as the commute itself because both legislated black poverty as early as the 1900s. The shared minibus taxi, therefore, became

⁵¹⁵ This claim pushes back against any and all studies that do not put global social inequalities at the center of transport inquiry. Only recently have scholars of transport and automobility made central local understandings of global inequality, and crafted their analysis from Africa. See Green-Simms.

a necessity, and apartheid, in the middle of the 20th century, fixed the market so commuters would depend on taxis to reinforce spatial and economic inequalities until the end of time. If there were no taxis, people living in the poorest townships could never survive. So, commuters taxied daily, which in turn helped race-based segregation thrive. Bridging the literature on apartheid, colonialism, and segregation in Cape Town, and the literature on the resistance to black economic dispossession and racial-spatial displacement in Johannesburg, the thesis contended that colonialism and apartheid created every local mode of public, private, and popular transportation in South Africa in order to maintain its national social engineering project, including the black-led shared minibus taxi industry.

While forces from above made innumerable the number of dispossessed and displaced black people and communities, the history of the shared minibus taxi is also proof that neither apartheid nor settler colonialism determined the ways the vast driving and commuting underclasses would use economic and political organizing to contest their oppressors. While the three most important national transport decisions were fundamental to the development of South Africa's system of shared minibus taxis, (1) J. C. Le Roux's Motor Carrier Transportation Act of 1930, which created LRTBs to license taxis and discriminate against the vast majority of black drivers vying for licenses, (2) Alex van Breda's Road Transportation Act of 1977, which allowed licensed taxi drivers to use 10- and, eventually, 16-seater vehicles to ply routes between townships, homelands, and areas designated whites-only, and (3) Peter Welgemoed's failed 1983 amendment to the van Breda's Road Transportation Act, which would eventually deregulate the taxi industry in 1988 and stimulate hundreds of taxi wars throughout the country, each of

which, cannot be understood without contextualizing them within the forcible removal and relocation programs the apartheid state set up to remove millions of black South Africans of place and property.

The unresolved question in the thesis is why truly efficacious transport-based solutions for social problems like urban segregation have been so difficult for former settler colonies to roll out. Instead of asking how cars, buses, trains, taxis, or any other modern vehicle can be designed to bring people in cities together on equal footing, the book shows how unresolved deep histories of settler colonialism and inequality are, in fact, the challenge facing transport reform in the 21st century, *not* the technologies themselves, no matter how good or socially progressive the intentions behind making the technologies are.

Theoretically, part of the problem with deploying repossession/replacement schemes to combat histories of dispossession/displacement in a country like South Africa, which has not yet solved the problems of race and racism, are the myths of equality in spaces settler colonialism made possible in the first place. If possession is what's at stake in South Africa's history, and the word itself means "the action of holding something (material or immaterial) as one's own or in one's control," then both repossession and dispossession will always be premised on power, particularly the power "to take hold of a person," "to affect or influence strongly and persistently," or to actuate, dominate, [or] control."⁵¹⁶ Also, if both the struggles to segregate or liberate from segregation is about

⁵¹⁶ I borrow these quotations from the Oxford English Dictionary's definitions of the verb "possess" and the noun "possession." The verb "possess" means "1) To own, to have or gain ownership of; to have (wealth or material objects) as one's own; to hold as property. Also, to hold or enjoy (something non-material); to have as an attribute, property, condition, etc.; to be characterized by (a quality, characteristic, etc.). Also, to have

“position,” “station,” “proper or *appropriate* relative places,” then institutions in power are necessary to adjudicate the distance and character of the spaces people occupy at a particular time in place.⁵¹⁷ Thus, every time institutions such as states confer place or

knowledge or command of (a language, subject, skill); to be familiar with, conversant in. Also, to have possession of, as distinct from ownership; esp. to hold or occupy as a tenant, to lease; 2) Of an idea, attitude, etc.: to take hold of (a person), to have a hold over (a person); to affect or influence strongly and persistently; to actuate, dominate, control; 3) Of a demon or spirit, esp. an evil one: to occupy and have power over (a person, animal, etc.). Also, to control or dominate from within; 4) To take possession of, seize, grasp; to come into possession of, obtain, gain, win. Also, to gain sexual possession of (a woman); to have sexual intercourse with. 5) To control or have dominion over (a person, a person's heart, mind, or soul); 6) To keep or maintain (oneself, one's mind or soul) in a specified state or condition. Also, to maintain control over, to keep calm or steady.” While the noun “possession” means, “1) The action of holding something (material or immaterial) as one's own or in one's control; the state or condition of being so held. Also, visible power or control over something (defined by the intention to use or to hold it against others) as distinct from lawful ownership; specifically, exclusive control of land. Also, temporary control of the ball, puck, etc., by a particular player or team; a period of such control. Also more generally: the extent of a team's control of the ball, etc., or resulting dominance in a match. Also, the offense of possessing drugs or other illegal substances. 2) That which is possessed or held as property; something belonging to one, a piece of property; belongings, property, wealth. Also, a territory subject to a sovereign ruler or state; (now chiefly) any of a country's foreign dominions. 3) Domination of a person's heart, mind, or soul by a person or other agent. Also, domination of a person by an idea, thought, feeling, etc. Also occasionally: the thought or feeling itself, a preoccupation, an obsession. 4) Domination or control of a person by a demon or spirit; an instance of this.”

⁵¹⁷ Again, I borrow these quotations from the Oxford English Dictionary's definitions of the verb “place” and the noun “place.” The verb “place,” means “To put or set (in a particular place, spot, or position); to station, position. Also, to put (a number of people or things) in the proper or appropriate relative places; to set in order, arrange. Also, to direct (the ball in sport) with controlled precision. 2) To appoint or assign to a post or office. Also, to find a situation, vacancy, or available place for (a person); to arrange for the employment, care, or marriage of; to settle (a person). 3) To determine or fix the place of; to assign a place; specifically a) to assign a certain rank, importance or worth to; to class; b) to fix the chronological position of; to date; c) to assign or refer to a particular locality or setting; to locate. Also, to establish, remember, or guess the identity of (usually in negative contexts). Also: to assign to a particular category, class, or context. 4) To believe or suppose (a quality or attribute) to reside or consist in something. 5) To put (faith, confidence, trust, etc.) in. Also to put (reliance) on. 6) To put (a thing) in a suitable or desirable place for a certain purpose; specifically a) to lend out (money or funds) at interest; to invest; b) to dispose of (goods) by sale to a customer; to sell (shares,

possession, then scholars, professionals, and ordinary people must always pay particular attention to the multitudinous elements of power at play in making sure equality materializes.

holdings, etc.) privately to a buyer; c) to lodge (an order for goods or services, a bet, etc.) with a selected person or firm; d) to arrange for the publication of (piece of writing, advertisement, etc.) or the performance of (a theatrical piece). 7) To confirm the final position of (a horse or other competitor in a race), especially as having finished among the first three (occasionally four). 8) To score (a goal) from a place-kick.” While the noun “place,” means “1) A (public or residential) square. 2) A small residential square or a side street (especially a cul-de-sac) lined with houses; a short row of houses which originally stood by themselves or on a suburban road; any group of houses not properly classifiable as a street. 3) Room, available space. Also: a space that can be occupied. 4) A particular part or region of space; a physical locality, a locale; a spot, a location. Also: a region or part of the earth’s surface. Also, the amount or quantity of space actually occupied by a person or thing; the position of a body in space, or in relation to other bodies; situation, location. 5) A particular part of or location in a book or document. Also, a particular passage in a book or document, separately considered, or bearing upon a particular subject; an extract. (Now obsolete). 6) A particular area or spot in or on a larger body, structure, or surface; an area on the skin. 7) A dwelling, a house; a person’s home; a mansion a country house with its surroundings, the principal residence on an estate. Also: a farm or farmstead. Also, a building, establishment, or area devoted to a particular purpose. 8) A particular spot or area inhabited or frequented by people; a city, a town, a village.”

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